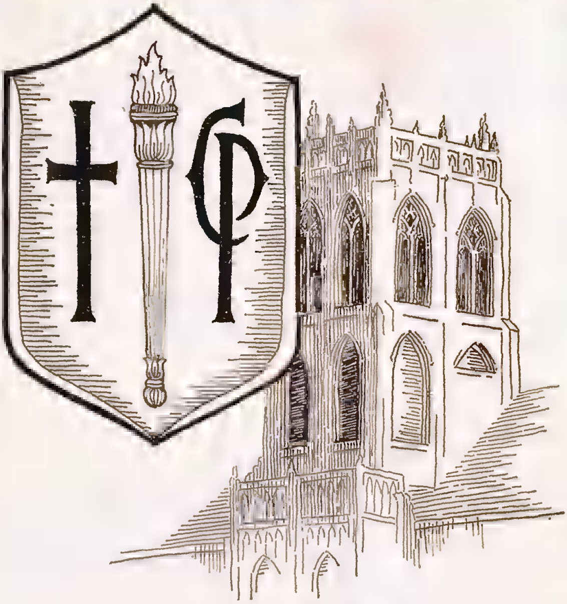

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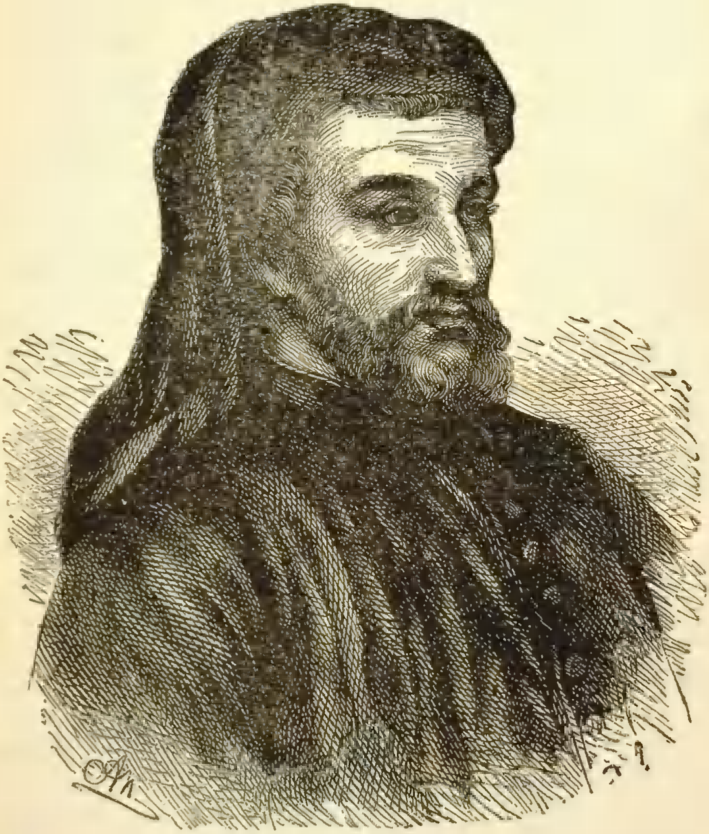

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

ENGLISH

MEN of LETTERS.

EDITED BY
JOHN MORLEY.

CONTAINING

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CHAUCER...................By Professor A. W. W.
COWPER.........................By Goldwin Smith.
SOUTHEY...................By Professor Dowden.
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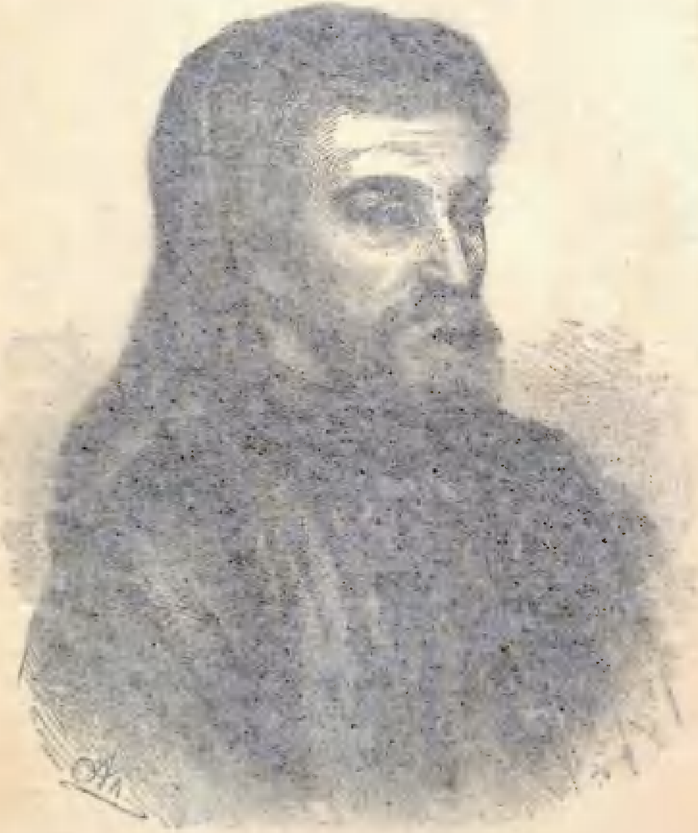

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CHAUCER.

BY

ADOLPHUS WILLIAM WARD.

ACME BIOGRAPHY.

CHAUCER.

CHAPTER I.

CHAUCER'S TIMES.

THE biography of Geoffrey Chaucer is no longer a mixture of unsifted facts, and of more or less hazardous conjectures. Many and wide as are the gaps in our knowledge concerning the course of his outer life, and doubtful as many important passages of it remain—in vexatious contrast with the certainty of other relatively insignificant *data*—we have at least become aware of the foundations on which alone a trustworthy account of it can be built. These foundations consist partly of a meagre though gradually increasing array of external evidence, chiefly to be found in public documents—in the Royal Wardrobe Book, the Issue Rolls of the Exchequer, the Customs Rolls, and such-like records—partly of the conclusions which may be drawn with confidence from the internal evidence of the poet's own indisputably genuine works, together with a few references to him in the writings of his contemporaries or immediate successors. Which of his works are to be accepted as genuine, necessarily forms the subject of an antecedent enquiry, such as cannot with any degree of safety be conducted except on principles far from infallible with regard to all the instances to which they have been applied, but now accepted by the large majority of competent scholars. Thus, by a process which is in truth dulness and dryness itself, except to patient endeavor stimulated by the enthusiasm of special literary research, a limited number of results has been safely established, and others have, at all events, been placed beyond reasonable doubt. Around a third series of conclusions or conjectures the tempest of controversy still rages; and even now it needs a wary step to pass without fruitless deviations through a maze of assumptions consecrated by their longevity, or commended to sympathy by the fervor of personal conviction.

A single instance must suffice to indicate both the difficulty and the significance of many of those questions of Chaucerian biography which, whether interesting or not in themselves, have to be determined before Chaucer's life can be written. They are not, "all and some," mere antiquarians' puzzles, of interest only to those who have leisure and inclination for microscopic enquiries. So with the point immediately in view. It has been said with much force that Tyrwhitt, whose services to the study of Chaucer remain uneclipsed by those of any other scholar, would have composed a quite different biography of the poet, had he not been confounded by the formerly (and here and there still) accepted date of Chaucer's birth, the year 1328. For the correctness of this date Tyrwhitt "supposed" the poet's tombstone in Westminster Abbey to be the voucher; but the slab placed on a pillar near his grave (it is said at the desire of Caxton), appears to have merely borne a Latin inscription without any dates; and the marble monument erected in its stead, "in the name of the Muses," by Nicolas Brigham in 1556, while giving October 25th, 1400, as the day of Chaucer's death, makes no mention either of the date of his birth or of the number of years to which he attained, and, indeed, promises no more information than it gives. That Chaucer's contemporary, the poet Gower, should have referred to him in the year 1392 as "now in his days old," is at best a very vague sort of testimony, more especially as it is by mere conjecture that the year of Gower's own birth is placed as far back as 1320. Still less weight can be attached to the circumstance that another poet, Occleve, who clearly regarded himself as the disciple of one by many years his senior, in accordance with the common phraseology of his (and, indeed, of other) times, spoke of the older writer as his "father," and "father reverent." In a colored portrait carefully painted from memory by Occleve on the margin of a manuscript, Chaucer is represented with grey hair and beard; but this could not of itself be taken to contradict the supposition that he died about the age of sixty. And Leland's assertion that Chaucer attained to old age self-evidently rests on tradition only; for Leland was born more than a century after Chaucer died. Nothing occurring in any of Chaucer's own works of undisputed genuineness throws any real light on the subject. His poem, the *House of Fame*, has been variously dated; but at any period of his manhood he might have said, as he says there, that he was "too old" to learn astronomy, and preferred to take his science on faith. In the curious lines called *L'Envoy de Chaucer à Scogan*, the poet, while blaming his friend for his want of perseverance in a love-suit, classes himself among "them that be hoar and round of shape," and speaks of himself and his Muse as out of date and rusty. But there seems no sufficient reason for removing the date of the composition of these lines to an earlier year than 1393; and poets as well as other men since Chaucer have spoken of themselves as old and obsolete at fifty. A similar remark might be made concerning the reference to the poet's old age, "which dulleth him in his spirit," in the *Complaint of Venus*, generally ascribed to the last decennium of Chaucer's life. If we reject the evidence of a further passage, in the *Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, a poem of disputed genuineness, we accordingly arrive at the conclusion that there is no reason for demurring to the only direct external evidence in existence as to the date of Chaucer's birth. At a famous trial of a cause of chivalry held at Westminster in 1386, Chaucer, who had gone through part of a campaign with one of the litigants, appeared as a witness; and on this occasion his age was, doubtless on his own deposition, recorded as that of a man "of forty years and upwards," who had borne arms for twenty-seven years. A careful enquiry into the accuracy of the record as to the ages of the numerous other witnesses at the same trial has established it in an overwhelming majority of instances; and it is absurd gratuitously to charge Chaucer with having understated his age from motives of vanity. The conclusion, therefore, seems to remain unshaken, that he was born about the year 1340, or some time between that year and 1345.

Now, we possess a charming poem by Chaucer called the *Assembly of Fowls*, elaborately courtly in its conception, and in its execution giving proofs of Italian reading on the part of its author, as well as of a ripe humor such as is rarely an accompaniment of extreme youth. This poem has been thought by earlier commentators to allegorise an event known to have happened in 1358; by later critics, another which occurred in 1364. Clearly, the assumption that the period from 1340 to 1345 includes the date of Chaucer's birth suffices of itself to stamp the one of these conjectures as untenable, and the other as improbable, and (when the style of the poem and treatment of its subject are taken into account) adds weight to the other reasons in favor of the date 1381 for the poem in question. Thus, backwards and forwards, the disputed points in Chaucer's biography and the question of his works are affected by one another.

Chaucer's life, then, spans rather more than the latter half of the fourteenth century, the last year of which was indisputably the year of his death. In other words, it covers rather more than the interval between the most glorious epoch of Edward III.'s reign—for Crecy was fought in 1346—and the downfall, in 1399, of his unfortunate successor Richard II.

The England of this period was but a little land, if numbers be the test of greatness; but in Edward III.'s time, as in that of Henry V., who inherited so much of Edward's policy and revived so much of his glory, there stirred in this little body a mighty heart. It is only of a small population that the author of the *Vision concerning Piers Plowman* could have gathered the representatives into a single field, or that Chaucer himself could have composed a family picture fairly comprehending, though not altogether exhausting, the chief national character-types. In the year of King Richard II.'s accession (1377), according to a trustworthy calculation based upon the result of that year's poll-tax, the total number of the inhabitants of England seems to have been two millions and a half. A quarter of a century earlier—in the days of Chaucer's boyhood—their numbers had been perhaps twice as large. For not less than four great pestilences (in 1348–9. 1361–2, 1369, and 1375–6) had swept over the land, and at least one-half of its population, including two-thirds of the inhabitants of the capital, had been carried off by the ravages of the obstinate epidemic—"the foul death of England," as it was called in a formula of execration in use among the people. In this year—1377—London, where Chaucer was doubtless born as well as bred, where the greater part of his life was spent, and where the memory of his name is one of those associations which seem familiarly to haunt the banks of the historic river from Thames Street to Westminster, apparently numbered not more than 35,000 souls. But if, from the nature of the case, no place was more exposed than London to the inroads of the Black Death, neither was any other so likely elastically to recover from them. For the reign of Edward III. had witnessed a momentous advance in the prosperity of the capital—an advance reflecting itself in the outward changes introduced during the same period into the architecture of the city. Its wealth had grown larger as its houses had grown higher; and mediæval London, such as we are apt to picture it to ourselves, seems to have derived those leading features which it so long retained, from the days when Chaucer, with downcast but very observant eyes, passed along its streets between Billingsgate and Aldgate. Still, here as elsewhere in England, the remembrance of the most awful physical visitations which have ever befallen the country must have long lingered; and, after all has been said, it is wonderful that the traces of them should be so exceedingly scanty in Chaucer's pages. Twice only in his poems does he refer to the Plague : once in an allegorical fiction which is of Italian if not of French origin, and where, therefore, no special reference to the ravages of the disease *in England* may be intended when Death is said to have "a thousand slain this pestilence"—

> ". . . He hath slain this year
> Hence over a mile, within a great village
> Both men and women, child and hind and page."

The other allusion is a more than half humorous one. It occurs in the description of the *Doctor of Physic*, the grave graduate in purple surcoat and blue white-furred hood; nor, by the way, may this portrait itself be altogether without its use as throwing some light on the helplessness of fourteenth-century medical science. For though in all the world there was none like this doctor to *speak* of physic and of surgery; though he was a very perfect practitioner, and never at a loss for telling the cause of any malady and for supplying the patient with the appropriate drug, sent in by the doctor's old and faithful friends the apothecaries; though he was well versed in all the authorities from Æsculapius to the writer of the *Rosa Anglica* (who cures inflammation homœopathically by the use of red draperies); though, like a truly wise physician, he began at home by caring anxiously for his own digestion and for his peace of mind ("his study was but little in the Bible")—yet the basis of his scientific knowledge was "astronomy," *i. e.*, astrology, "the better part of medicine," as Roger Bacon calls it; together with that "natural magic" by which, as Chaucer elsewhere tells us, the famous among the learned have known how to make men whole or sick. And there was one specific which, from a double point of view, Chaucer's Doctor of Physic esteemed very highly, and was loth to part with on frivolous pretexts. He was but easy (*i. e.*, slack) of "dispence":—

> "He keptë that he won in pestilence.
> For gold in physic is a cordial;
> Therefore he lovèd gold in speciál.

Meanwhile the ruling classes seem to have been left untouched in heart by these successive ill-met and ill-guarded trials, which had first smitten the lower orders chiefly, then the higher with the lower (if the Plague of 1349 had swept off an archbishop, that of 1361 struck down, among others, Henry, Duke of Lancaster, the father of Chaucer's Duchess Blanche). Calamities such as these would assuredly have been treated as warnings sent from on high, both in earlier times, when a Church better braced for the due performance of its never-ending task, eagerly interpreted to awful ears the signs of the wrath of God, and by a later generation, leavened in spirit by the self-searching morality of Puritanism. But from the sorely-tried third quarter of the fourteenth century the solitary voice of Langland cries, as the voice of Conscience preaching with her cross, that "these pestilences" are the penalty of sin and of naught else. It is assuredly presumptuous for one generation, without the fullest proof, to accuse another of thoughtlessness or heartlessness; and though the classes for which Chaucer mainly wrote, and with which he mainly felt, were in all probability as little inclined to improve the occasions of the Black Death as the middle classes of the present day would be to fall on their kness after a season of commercial ruin, yet signs are not wanting that in the later years of the fourteenth century words of admonition came to be not unfrequently spoken. The portents of the eventful year 1382 called forth moralisings in English verse, and the pestilence of 1391 a rhymed lamentation in Latin; and at different dates in King Richard's reign, the poet Gower, Chaucer's contemporary and friend, inveighed both in Latin and in English, from his conservative point of view, against the corruption and sinfulness of society at large. But by this time the great peasant insurrection had added its warning, to which it was impossible to remain deaf.

A self-confident nation, however, is slow to betake itself to sackcloth and ashes. On the whole, it is clear that though the last years of Edward III. were a season of failure and disappointment—though from the period of the First Pestilence onwards the signs increase of the King's unpopularity and of the people's discontent—yet the overburdened and enfeebled nation was brought almost as slowly as the King himself to renounce the proud position of a conquering power. In 1363 he had celebrated the completion of his fiftieth year; and three suppliant kings had at that time been gathered as satellites round the sun of his success. By 1371 he had lost all his allies, and nearly all the conquests gained by himself and the valiant Prince of Wales; and during the years remaining to him his subjects hated his rule and angrily assailed his favorites. From being a conquering power the English monarchy was fast sinking into an island which found it difficult to defend its own shores. There were times towards the close of Edward's, and early in his successor's reign, when matters would have gone hard with English traders, naturally desirous of having their money's worth for their subsidy of tonnage and poundage, and anxious, like their type the *Merchant* in Chaucer, that "the sea were kept for anything" between Middleburgh and Harwich, had not some of them, such as the Londoner, John Philpot, occasionally armed and manned a squadron of ships on their own account, in defiance of red tape and its censures. But in the days when Chaucer and the generation with which he grew up were young, the ardor of foreign conquest had not yet died out in the land, and clergy and laity cheerfully co-operated in bearing the burdens which military glory has at all times brought with it for a civilised people. The high spirit of the English nation, at a time when the decline in its fortunes was already near at hand (1366), is evident from the answer given to the application from Rome for the arrears of thirty-three years of the tribute promised by King John; or rather from what must unmistakably have been the drift of that answer. Its terms are unknown, but the demand was never afterwards repeated.

The power of England, in the period of an ascendency to which she so tenaciously sought to cling, had not been based only upon the valor of her arms. Our country was already a rich one in comparison with most others in Europe. Other purposes besides that of providing good cheer for a robust generation were served by the wealth of her great landed proprietors, and of the "worthy vavasours" (smaller landowners) who, like Chaucer's *Franklin*—a very Saint Julian or pattern of hospitality—knew not what it was to be "without baked meat in the house, where their

"Tables dormant in the hall alway
Stood ready covered all the longë day."

From this source, and from the well-filled coffers of the traders, came the laity's share of the expenses of those foreign wars which did so much to consolidate national feeling in England. The foreign companies of merchants long contrived to retain the chief share of the banking business and export trade assigned to them by the short-sighted commercial policy of Edward III., and the weaving and fishing industries of Hanseatic and Flemish immigrants had established an almost unbearable competition in our own ports and towns. But the active import trade, which already connected England with both nearer and remoter parts of Christendom, must have been largely in native hands; and English chivalry, diplomacy, and literature followed in the lines of the trade routes to the Baltic and the Mediterranean. Our mariners, like their type the *Shipman* in Chaucer (an anticipation of the "Venturer" of later days, with the pirate as yet, perhaps, more strongly marked in him than the patriot),

> " . . . Knew well all the havens, as they were
> From Gothland, to the Cape of Finisterre,
> And every creek in Brittany and Spain."

Doubtless, as may be noticed in passing, much of the tendency on the part of our shipmen in this period to self-help, in offence as well as in defence, was due to the fact that the mercantile navy was frequently employed in expeditions of war, vessels and men being at times seized or impressed for the purpose by order of the Crown. On one of these occasions the port of Dartmouth, whence Chaucer at a venture ("for aught I wot") makes his *Shipman* hail, is found contributing a larger total of ships and men than any other port in England. For the rest, Flanders was certainly still far ahead of her future rival in wealth and in mercantile and industrial activity; as a manufacturing country she had no equal, and in trade the rival she chiefly feared was still the German Hansa. Chaucer's *Merchant* characteristically wears a "Flandrish beaver hat;" and it is no accident that the scene of the *Pardoner's Tale*, which begins with a description of "superfluity abominable," is laid in Flanders. In England, indeed, the towns never came to domineer as they did in the Netherlands. Yet, since no trading country will long submit to be ruled by the landed interest only, so in proportion as the English towns, and London especially, grew richer, their voices were listened to in the settlement of the affairs of the nation. It might be very well for Chaucer to close the description of his *Merchant* with what looks very much like a fashionable writer's half sneer:—

> "Forsooth, he was a worthy man withal;
> But, truly, I wot nót how men him call."

Yet not only was high political and social rank reached by individual "merchant princes," such as the wealthy William de la Pole, a descendant of whom is said (though on unsatisfactory evidence) to have been Chaucer's granddaughter, but the government of the country came to be very perceptibly influenced by the class from which they sprang. On the accession of Richard II., two London citizens were appointed controllers of the war-subsidies granted to the Crown; and in the Parliament of 1382 a committee of fourteen merchants refused to entertain the question of a merchants' loan to the King. The importance and self-consciousness of the smaller tradesmen and handicraftsmen increased with that of the great merchants. When, in 1393, King Richard II. marked the termination of his quarrel with the City of London by a stately procession through "new Troy," he has welcomed, according to the Friar who has commemorated the event in Latin verse, by the trades in an array resembling an angelic host; and among the crafts enumerated we recognise several of those represented in Chaucer's company of pilgrims—by the *Carpenter*, the *Webbe* (Weaver), and the *Dyer*, all clothed

> " . . . In one livery
> Of a solémn and great fraternity."

The middle class, in short, was learning to hold up its head, collectively and individually. The historical original of Chaucer's *Host*—the actual Master Harry Bailly, vintner and landlord of the Tabard Inn in Southwark, was likewise a member of Parliament, and very probably felt as sure of himself in real life as the mimic personage bearing his name does in its fictitious reproduction. And he and his fellows, the "poor and simple Commons"—for so humble was the style they were wont to assume in their addresses to the sovereign—began to look upon themselves, and to be looked upon, as a power in the State. The London traders and handicrafsmen knew what it was to be well-to-do citizens, and if they had failed to understand it, home monition would have helped to make it clear to them:—

> "Well seemèd each of them a fair burgéss,
> For sitting in a guildhall on a dais.
> And each one for the wisdom that he can
> Was shapely for to be an alderman.
> They had enough of chattels and of rent,
> And very gladly would their wives assent;
> And, truly, else they had been much to blame.
> It is full fair to be yclept *maddáme*,
> And fair to go to vigils all before,
> And have a mantel royally y-bore."

The English State had ceased to be the feudal monarchy—the ramification of contributory courts and camps—of the crude days of William the Conqueror and his successors. The Norman lords and their English dependents no longer formed two separate elements in the body-politic. In the great French wars of Edward III., the English armies had no longer mainly consisted of the baronial levies. The nobles had indeed, as of old, ridden into battle at the head of their vassals and retainers; but the body of the force had been made up of Englishmen serving for pay, and armed with their national implement, the bow—such as Chaucer's *Yeoman* carried with him on the ride to Canterbury:—

> " A sheaf of peacock arrows bright and keen
> Under his belt he bare full thriftily.
> Well could he dress his tackle yeomanly:
> His arrows droopèd not with feathers low,
> And in his hand he bare a mighty bow."

The use of the bow was specially favored by both Edward III. and his successor; and when, early in the next century, the chivalrous Scottish king, James I. (of whom mention will be made among Chaucer's poetic disciples) returned from his long English captivity to his native land, he had no more eager care than that his subjects should learn to emulate the English in the handling of their favorite weapon. Chaucer seems to be unable to picture an army without it, and we find him relating how, from ancient Troy,

> " Hector and many a worthy wight out went
> With spear in hand, and with their big bows bent."

No wonder that when the battles were fought by the people itself, and when the cost of the wars was to so large an extent defrayed by its self-imposed contributions, the Scottish and French campaigns should have called forth that national enthusiasm which found an echo in the songs of Lawrence Minot, as hearty war-poetry as has been composed in any age of our literature. They were put forth in 1352, and considering the unusual popularity they are said to have enjoyed, it is not impossible that they may have reached Chaucer's ears in his boyhood.

Before the final collapse of the great King's fortunes, and his death in a dishonored old age, the ambition of his heir, the proudest hope of both dynasty and nation, had overleapt itself, and the Black Prince had preceded his father to the tomb. The good ship England (so sang a contemporary poet) was left without rudder or helm; and in a kingdom full of faction and discontent, the future of the Plantagenet throne depended on a child. While the young king's ambitious uncle, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (Chaucer's patron), was in nominal retirement, and his academical ally, Wyclif, was gaining popularity as the mouthpiece of the resistance to the papal demands, there were fermenting beneath the surface elements of popular agitation, which had been but little taken into account by the political factions of Edward the Third's reign, and by that part of its society with which Chaucer was more especially connected. But the multitude, whose turn, in truth, comes but rarely in the history of a nation, must every now and then make itself heard, although poets may seem all but blind and deaf to the tempest as it rises, and bursts, and passes away. Many causes had concurred to excite the insurrection which temporarily destroyed the influence of John of Gaunt, and which for long cast a deep shade upon the effects of the teaching of Wyclif. The acquisition of a measure of rights and power by the middle classes had caused a general swaying upwards ; and throughout the people of Europes floated those dreams and speculations concerning the equality and fraternity of all men, which needed but a stimulus and an opportunity to assume the practical shape of a revolution. The melancholy thought which pervades Langland's *Vision* is still that of the helplessness of the poor ; and the remedy to which he looks against the corruption of the governing classes is the advent of a superhuman king, whom he identifies with the ploughman himself, the representative of suffering humanity. But about the same time as that of the composition of this poem—or not long afterwards—Wyclif had sent forth among the people his "simple priests," who illustrated by contrast the conflict which his teachings exposed between the existing practice of the Church and the original documents of her faith. The connection between Wyclif's teaching and the peasants' insurrection under Richard II. is as undeniable as that between Luther's doctrines and the great social uprising in Germany a century and a half afterwards. When, upon the declaration of the Papal Schism, Wyclif abandoned all hope of a reform of the Church from within, and, defying the injunctions of foe and friend alike, entered upon a course of theolegical opposition, the popular influence of his followers must have tended to spread a theory admitting of very easy application *ad hominem*—the theory, namely, that the tenure of all offices, whether spiritual or temporal, is justified only by the personal fitness of their occupants. With such levelling doctrine, the Socialism of popular preachers like John Balle might seem to coincide with sufficient closeness ; and since worthiness was not to be found in the holders of either spiritual or temporal authority, of either ecclesiastical or lay wealth, the time had palpably come for the poor man to enjoy his own again. Then, the advent of a weak government, over which a powerful kinsman of the King and unconcealed adversary of the Church was really seeking to recover the control, and the imposition of a tax coming home to all men except actual beggars, and filling serfdom's cup of bitterness to overflowing, supplied the opportunity, and the insurrection broke out. Its violence fell short of that of the French *Jacquerie* a quarter of a century earlier ; but no doubt could exist as to its critical importance. As it happened, the revolt turned with special fury against the possessions of the Duke of Lancaster, whose sympathies with the cause of ecclesiastical reform it definitively extinguished.

After the suppression of this appalling movement by a party of Order, comprehending in it all who had anything to lose, a period of reaction ensued. In the reign of Richard II., whichever faction might be in the ascendant, and whatever direction the King's own sympathies may have originally taken, the last state of the peasantry was without doubt worse than the first. Wyclifism as an influence rapidly declined with the death of Wyclif himself, as it hardly could but decline, considering the absence from his teaching of any tangible system of

Church government; and Lollardry came to be the popular name, or nickname, for any and every form of dissent from the existing system. Finally, Henry of Lancaster, John of Gaunt's son, mounted the throne as a sort of saviour of society—a favorite character for usurpers to pose in before the applauding assemblage of those who claim "a stake in the country." Chaucer's contemporary, Gower, whose wisdom was of the kind which goes with the times, who was in turn a flatterer of Richard and (by the simple expedient of a revised second edition of his *magnum opus*) a flatterer of Henry, offers better testimony than Chaucer to the conservatism of the upper classes of his age, and to the single-minded anxiety for the good times when

"Justice of law is held;
The privilege of royalty
Is safe, and all the barony
Worshippèd is in its estate.
The people stand in obeisánce
Under the rule of governánce."

Chaucer is less explicit, and may have been too little of a politician by nature to care for preserving an outward consistency in his incidental remarks concerning the lower classes. In his *Clerk's Tale* he finds room for a very dubious commonplace about the "stormy people," its levity, untruthfulness, indiscretion, fickleness, and garrulity, and the folly of putting any trust in it. In his *Nun's Priest's Tale* he further enlivens one of the liveliest descriptions of a hue-and-cry ever put upon paper by a direct reference to the Peasants' Rebellion:—

"So hideous was the noise, ah *bencité!*
That of a truth Jack Straw, and his meinie
Not madë never shoutës half so shrill,
When that they any Fleming meant to kill."

Assuredly, again, there is an unmistakably conservative tone in the *Ballad* purporting to have been sent by him *to King Richard*, with its refrain as to all being "lost for want of steadfastness," and its admonition to its sovereign to

" . . Shew forth the sword of castigatión."

On the other hand, it would be unjust to leave unnoticed the passage, at once powerful and touching, in the so-called *Parson's Tale* (the sermon which closes the *Canterbury Tales* as Chaucer left them), in which certain lords are reproached for taking of their bondmen *amercements*, "which might more reasonably be called extortions than *amercements*," while lords in general are commanded to be good to their thralls (serfs), because "those that they clept thralls, be God's people; for humble folks be Christ's friends; they be contubernially with the Lord." The solitary type, however, of the laboring man proper which Chaucer, in manifest remembrance of Langland's allegory, produces, is one which, beautiful and affecting as it is, has in it a flavor of the comfortable sentiment, that things are as they should be. This is—not, of course, the *Parson* himself, of which most significant character hereafter, but—the *Parson's* brother, the *Ploughman*. He is a true laborer and a good, religious and charitable in his life, and always ready to pay his tithes. In short, he is a true Christian, but, at the same time, the ideal rather than the prototype, if one may so say, of the conservative working man.

Such were some, though of course some only, of the general currents of English public life in the latter half—Chaucer's half—of the fourteenth century. Its social features were naturally in accordance with the course of the national history. In the first place, the slow and painful process of amalgamation between the Normans and the English was still unfinished, though the reign of Edward III. went far towards completing what had rapidly advanced since the reigns of John and Henry III. By the middle of the fourteenth century English had become, or was just becoming, the common tongue of the whole nation. Among the political poems and songs preserved from the days of Edward III. and Richard II., not a single one composed on English soil is written in French. Parliament was opened by an English speech in the year 1363, and in the previous year the proceedings in the law courts were ordered to be conducted in the native tongue. Yet when Chaucer wrote his *Canterbury Tales*, it seem sstill to have continued the pedantic affectation of a profession for its members, like Chaucer's *Man of Law*, to introduce French law-terms into common conversation; so that it is natural enough to find the *Summoner* following suit, and interlarding his *Tale* with the Latin scraps picked up by him from the decrees and pleadings of the ecclesiastical courts. Meanwhile, manifold difficulties had delayed or interfered with the fusion between the two races, before the victory of the English language showed this fusion to have been in substance accomplished. One of these difficulties, which has been sometimes regarded as fundamental, has doubtless been exaggerated by national feeling on either side; but that it existed is not to be denied. Already in those ages the national character and temperament of French and English differed largely from one another; though the reasons why they so differed remain a matter of argument. In a dialogue, dated from the middle of the fourteenth century, the French interlocutor attributes this difference to the respective national beverages: "*We* are nourished with the pure juice of the grape, while naught but the dregs is sold to the English, who will take anything for liquor that is liquid." The case is put with scarcely greater politeness by a living French critic of high repute, according to whom the English, still weighted down by Teutonic phlegm, were drunken gluttons, agitated at intervals by poetic enthusiasm, while the Normans, on the other hand, lightened by their transplantation, and by the admixture of a variety of elements, already found the claims of *esprit* developing themselves within them. This is an explanation which explains nothing—least of all, the problem: why the lively strangers should have required the contact with insular phlegm in order to receive the creative impulse—why, in other words, Norman-French literature should have derived so enormous an advantage from the transplantation of Normans to English ground. But the evil days when the literary labors of Englishmen had been little better than bond-service to the tastes of their foreign masters had passed away, since the Norman barons had, from whatever motive, invited the commons of England to take a share with them in the national councils. After this, the question of the relations between the two languages, and the wider one of the relations between the two nationalities, could only be decided by the peaceable adjustment of the influences exercised by the one side upon the other. The Norman noble, his ideas, and the expression they found in forms of life and literature, had henceforth, so to speak, to stand on their merits; the days of their dominion, as a matter of course, had passed away.

Together with not a little of their political power, the Norman nobles of Chaucer's time had lost something of the traditions of their order. Chivalry had not quite come to an end with the Crusades; but it was a difficult task to maintain all its laws, written and unwritten, in these degenerate days. No laurels were any longer to be gained in the Holy Land; and though the campaigns of the great German Order against the pagans of Prussia and Lithuania attracted the service of many an English knight—in the middle of the century, Henry, Duke of Lancaster, fought there, as his grandson, afterwards King Henry IV., did forty years later—yet the substitute was hardly adequate in kind. Of the great mediæval companies of Knights, the most famous had, early in the century, perished under charges which were undoubtedly in the main foul fictions, but at the same time were only too much in accord with facts betokening an unmistakable decay of the true spirit of chivalry; before the century closed, lawyers were rolling parchments in the halls of the Templars by the Thames. Thus, though the age of chivalry had not yet ended, its supremacy was already on the wane, and its ideal was growing dim. In the history of English chivalry the reign of Edward III. is memorable, not only for the foundation of our most illustrious order of knighthood, but likewise for many typical acts of knightly valor and courtesy, as well on the part of the King when in his better days, as on that of his heroic son. Yet it cannot be by accident that an undefinable air of the old-fashioned clings to that most delightful of all Chaucer's character sketches, the *Knight* of the *Canterbury Tales.* His warlike deeds at Alexandria, in Prussia, and elsewhere, may be illustrated from those of more than one actual knight of the times; and the whole description of him seems founded on one by a French poet of King John of Bohemia, who had at least the external features of a knight of the old school. The chivalry, however, which was in fashion as the century advanced, was one outwardly far removed from the sturdy simplicity of Chaucer's *Knight*, and inwardly often rotten in more than one vital part. In show and splendor a higher point was probably reached in Edward III.'s than in any preceding reign. The extravagance in dress which prevailed in this period is too well known a characteristic of it to need dwelling upon. Sumptuary laws in vain sought to restrain this foible; and it rose to such a pitch as even to oblige men, lest they should be precluded from indulging in gorgeous raiment, to abandon hospitality, a far more amiable species of excess. When the kinds of clothing respectively worn by the different classes served as distinctions of rank, the display of splendor in one class could hardly fail to provoke emulation in the others. The long-lived English love for "crying" colors shows itself amusingly enough in the early pictorial representations of several of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims, though in floridity of apparel, as of speech, the youthful *Squire* bears away the bell :—

"Embroidered was he, as it were a mead
All full of freshest flowers, white and red."

But of the artificiality and extravagance of the costumes of these times we have direct contemporary evidence, and loud contemporary complaints. Now, it is the jagged cut of the garments, punched and shredded by the man-milliner; now, the wide and high collars and the long-pointed boots, which attract the indignation of the moralist; at one time he inveighs against the "horrible disordinate scantiness" of the clothing worn by gallants, at another against the "outrageous array" in which ladies love to exhibit their charms. The knights' horses are decked out with not less finery than are the knights themselves, with "curious harness, as in saddles and bridles, cruppers and breastplates, covered with precious clothing, and with bars and plates of gold and silver." And though it is hazardous to stigmatize the fashions of any one period as specially grotesque, yet it is significant of this age to find the reigning court beauty appearing at a tournament robed as Queen of the Sun; while even a lady from a manufacturing district, the *Wife of Bath*, makes the most of her opportunities to be seen as well as to see. Her "kerchiefs" were "full fine" of texture, and weighed, one might be sworn, ten pound—

"That on a Sunday were upon her head,
Her hosen too were of fine scarlet red,
Full straight y-tied, and shoes full moist and new.
* * * * * * *
Upon an ambler easily she sat,
Y-wimpled well, and on her head a hat,
As broad as is a buckler or a targe."

So, with a foot-mantle round her hips, and a pair of sharp spurs on her feet, she looked as defiant as any self-conscious Amazon of any period. It might, perhaps, be shown how, in more important artistic efforts than fashions of dress, this age displayed its aversion from simplicity and moderation. At all events, the love of the florid and overloaded declares itself in what we know concerning the social life of the nobility, as, for instance, we find that life reflected in the pages of Froissart, whose counts and lords seem neither to clothe themselves nor to feed themselves, nor to talk, pray, or swear like ordinary mortals. The *Vows of the Heron*, a poem of the earlier part of King Edward III.'s reign, contains a choice collection of strenuous knightly oaths; and in a humbler way the rest of the population very naturally imitated the parlance of their rulers, and in the words of the *Parson's Tale*, "dismembered Christ by soul, heart, bones, and body."

But there is one very much more important feature to be noticed in the social life of the nobility, for whom Chaucer's poetry must have largely replaced the French verse in which they had formerly delighted. The relation between knight and lady plays a great part in the history as well as in the literature of the later Plantagenet period; and incontestably its conceptions of this relation still retained much of the pure sentiment belonging to the best and most fervent times of Christian chivalry. The highest religious expression which has ever been given to man's sense of woman's mission, as his life's comfort and crown, was still a universally dominant belief. To the Blessed Virgin, King Edward III. dedicated his principal religious foundation; and Chaucer, to whatever extent his opinions or sentiments may have been in accordance with ideas of ecclesiastical reform, displays a pious devotion towards the foremost Saint of the Church. The lyric entitled the *Praise of Women*, in which she is enthusiastically recognized as the representative of the whole of her sex, is generally rejected as not Chaucer's; but the elaborate "Orison to the Holy Virgin," beginning

"Mother of God, and Virgin undefiled,"

seems to be correctly described as *Oratio Gallfridi Chaucer;* and in *Chaucer's A. B. C., called La Prière de Notre Dame*, a translation by him from a French original, we have a long address to the Blessed Virgin in twenty-three stanzas, each of which begins with one of the letters of the alphabet arranged in proper succession. Nor, apart from this religious sentiment, had men yet altogether lost sight of the ideal of true knightly love, destined though this ideal was to be obscured in the course of time, until at last the *Mort d'Arthure* was the favorite literary nourishment of the minions and mistresses of Edward IV.'s degenerate days. In his *Book of the Duchess* Chaucer has left us a picture of true knightly love, together with one of true maiden purity. The lady celebrated in this poem was loth, merely for the sake of coquetting with their exploits, to send her knights upon errands of chivalry—

". . . Into Walachy,
To Prussia, and to Tartary,
To Alexandria or Turkéy."

And doubtless there was many a gentle knight or squire to whom might have been applied the description given by the heroine of Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressid* of her lover, and of that which attracted her in him:—

"For trust ye well that your estate royál,
Nor vain delight, nor only worthiness
Of you in war or tourney martial,
Nor pomp, array, nobility, richés,
Of these none made me rue on your distress;
But moral virtue, grounded upon truth,
That was the cause I first had on your ruth.

"And gentle heart, and manhood that ye had,
And that ye had (as méthought) in despite
Everything that tended unto bad,
As rudeness, and as popular appetite,
And that your reason bridled your delight;
'Twas these did make 'bove every creatúre
That I was yours, and shall while I may 'dure."

And if true affection under the law still secured the sympathy of the better-balanced part of society, so the vice of those who made war upon female virtue, or the insolence of those who falsely boasted of their conquests, still incurred its resentment. Among the companies which in the *House of Fame* sought the favor of its mistress, Chaucer vigorously satirises the would-be lady-killers, who were content with the *reputation* of accomplished seducers; and in *Troilus and Cressid* a shrewd observer exclaims with the utmost vivacity against

"Such sort of folk—what shall I clepe them? what?
That vaunt themselves of women, and by name,
That yet to them ne'er promised this or that,
Nor knew them more, in sooth, than mine old hat."

The same easy but sagacious philosopher (Pandarus) observes that the harm which is in this world springs as often from folly as from malice. But a deeper feeling animates the lament of the "good Alceste," in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, that among men the betrayal of women is now "held a game." So indisputably it was already often esteemed, in too close an accordance with examples set in the highest places in the land. If we are to credit an old tradition, a poem in which Chaucer narrates the amours of Mars and Venus was written by him at the request of John of Gaunt, to celebrate the adultery of the duke's sister-in-law with a nobleman, to whom the injured kinsman afterwards married one of his own daughters! But nowhere was the deterioration of sentiment on this head more strongly typified than in Edward III. himself. The King, who (if the pleasing tale be true which gave rise to some beautiful scenes in an old English drama) had in his early days royally renounced an unlawful passion for the fair Countess of Salisbury, came to be accused of at once violating his conjugal duty and neglecting his military glory for the sake of strange women's charms. The founder of the Order of the Garter—the device of which enjoined purity even of thought as a principle of conduct—died in the hands of a rapacious courtesan. Thus, in England, as in France, the ascendency is gained by ignobler views concerning the relation between the sexes—a relation to which the whole system of chivalry owed a great part of its vitality, and on the view of which prevailing in the most influential class of any nation, the social health of that nation must inevitably in no small measure depend. Meanwhile, the artificialities by means of which in France, up to the beginning of the fifteenth century, it was sought to keep alive an organised system of sentimentality in the social dealings between gentlemen and ladies, likewise found admission in England, but only in a modified degree. Here the fashion in question arserted itself only, or chiefly, in our poetic literature, and in the adoption by it of such fancies as the praise and worship of the daisy, with which we meet in the Prologue to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, and in the *Flower and the Leaf*, a most pleasing poem (suggested by a French model), which it is unfortunately no longer possible to number among his genuine works. The poem of the *Court of Love*, which was likewise long erroneously attributed to him, may be the original work of an English author; but in any case its main contents are a mere adaptation of a peculiar outgrowth on a foreign soil of conceptions common to chivalry in general.

Of another force, which in the Middle Ages shared with chivalry (though not with it alone) the empire over the minds of men, it would certainly be rash to assert that its day was passing away in the latter half of the fourteenth century. It has, indeed, been pointed out that the date at which Wyclif's career as a reformer may be said to have begun almost coincides with that of the climax and first decline of feudal chivalry in England. But, without seeking to interpret coincidences, we know that, though the influence of the Christian Church, and that of its Roman branch in particular, has asserted and re-asserted itself in various ways and degrees in various ages, yet in England, as elsewhere, the epoch of its moral omnipotence had come to an end many generations before the disruption of its external framework. In the fourteenth century men had long ceased to look for the mediation of the Church between an overbearing Crown and a baronage and commonalty eager for the maintenance of their rights or for the assertion of their claims. On the other hand, the conflicts which still recurred between the temporal power and the Church had as little reference as ever to spiritual concerns. Undoubtedly, the authority of the Church over the minds of the people still depended in the main upon the spiritual influence she exercised over them; and the desire for a reformation of the Church, which was already making itself felt in a gradually widening sphere, was, by the great majority of those who cherished it, held perfectly compatible with a recognition of her authority. The world, it has been well said, needed an enquiry extending over three centuries, in order to learn to walk without the aid of the Church of Rome. Wyclif, who sought to emancipate the human conscience from reliance upon any earthly authority intermediate between the soul and its Maker, reckoned without his generation; and few, except those with whom audacity took the place of argument, followed him to the extreme results of his speculations. The Great Schism rather stayed than promoted the growth of an English feeling against Rome, since it was now no longer necessary to acknowledge a Pope who seemed the henchman of the arch-foe across the narrow seas.

But although the progress of English sentiment towards the desire for liberation from Rome was to be interrupted by a long and seemingly decisive reaction, yet in the fourteenth, as in the sixteenth, century the most active cause of the alienation of the people from the Church was the conduct of the representatives of the Church themselves. The Reformation has most appropriately retained in history a name at first unsuspiciously applied to the removal of abuses in the ecclesiastical administration and in the life of the clergy. What aid could be derived by those who really hungered for spiritual food, or what strength could accrue to the thoughtless faith of the light-hearted majority, from many of the most common varieties of the English ecclesiastic of the later Middle Ages? Apart from the Italian and other foreign holders of English benefices, who left their flocks to be tended by deputy, and to be shorn by an army of the most offensive kind of tax-gatherers, the native clergy included many species, but among them few which, to the popular eye, seemed to embody a high ideal of religious life. The times had by no means come to an end when many of the higher clergy sought to vie with the lay lords in warlike prowess. Perhaps the martial Bishop of Norwich, who, after persecuting the heretics at home, had commanded an army of crusaders in Flanders, levied on behalf of Pope Urban VI. against the anti-Pope Clement VII. and his adherents, was in the poet Gower's mind when he complains that while

> " . . . The law is rulèd so,
> That clerks unto the war intend,
> I wot not how they should amend
> The woeful world in other things,
> And so make peace between the kings
> After the law of charity,
> Which is the duty properly
> Belonging unto the priesthóod."

A more general complaint, however, was that directing itself against the extravagance and luxury of life in which the dignified clergy indulged. The cost of these unspiritual pleasures the great prelates had ample means for defraying in the revenues of their sees; while lesser dignitaries had to be active in levying their dues or the fines of their courts, lest everything should flow into the receptacles of their superiors. So in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale* an unfriendly Regular says of an archdeacon:—

> "For smallë tithes and for small offering
> He made the people piteously to sing.
> For ere the bishop caught them on his hook,
> They were down in the archëdeacon's book."

As a matter of course, the worthy who filled the office of *Summoner* to the court of the archdeacon in question had a keen eye for the profitable improprieties subject to its penalties, and was aided in his efforts by the professional abettors of vice whom he kept "ready to his hand." Nor is it strange that the undisguised worldliness of many members of the clerical profession should have reproduced itself in other lay subordinates, even in the parish clerks, at all times apt to copy their betters, though we would fain hope such was not the case with the parish clerk, "the jolly Absalom" of the *Miller's Tale.* The love of gold had corrupted the acknowledged chief guardians of incorruptible treasures, even though few may have avowed this love as openly as the "idle" *Canon*, whose *Yeoman* had so strange a tale to tell to the Canterbury pilgrims concerning his master's absorbing devotion to the problem of the multiplication of gold. To what a point the popular discontent with the vices of the higher secular clergy had advanced in the last decennium of the century, may be seen from the poem called the *Complaint of the Ploughman*—a production pretending to be by the same hand which in the *Vision* had dwelt on the sufferings of the people and on the sinfulness of the ruling classes. Justly or unjustly, the indictment was brought against the priests of being the agents of every evil influence among the people, the soldiers of an army of which the true head was not God, but Belial.

In earlier days the Church had known how to compensate the people for the secular clergy's neglect, or imperfect performance, of its duties. But in no respect had the ecclesiastical world more changed than in this. The older monastic Orders had long since lost themselves in unconcealed worldliness; how, for instance, had the Benedictines changed their character since the remote times when their Order had been the principal agent in revivifying the religion of the land! Now, they were taunted with their very name, as having been bestowed upon them "by antiphrasis," *i.e.*, by contraries. For many of their monasteries, and from the inmates who dwelt in these comfortable halls, had vanished even all pretence of disguise. Chaucer's *Monk* paid no attention to the rule of St. Benedict, and of his disciple St. Maur,

> "Because that it was old and somewhat strait;"

and preferred to fall in with the notions of later times. He was an "outrider, that loved venery," and whom his tastes and capabilities would have well qualified for the dignified post of abbot. He had "full many a dainty horse" in his stable, and the swiftest of grey-hounds to boot; and rode forth gayly, clad in superfine furs and a hood elegantly fastened with a gold pin, and tied into a love-knot at the "greater end," while the bridle of his steed jingled as if its rider had been as good a knight as any of them—this last, by the way, a mark of ostentation against which Wyclif takes occasion specially to inveigh. This Monk (and Chaucer must say that he was wise in his generation) could not understand why he should study books and unhinge his mind by the effort; life was not worth having at the price; and no one knew better to what use to put the pleasing gift of existence. Hence mine host of the Tabard, a very competent critic, had reason for the opinion which he communicated to the Monk:—

"It is a noble pasture where thou go'st;
Thou art not like a penitent or ghost."

In the Orders of nuns, certain corresponding features were becoming usual. But little in the way of religious guidance could fall to the lot of a sisterhood presided over by such a *Prioress* as Chaucer's Madame Eglantine, whose mind—possibly because her nunnery fulfilled the functions of a finishing school for young ladies—was mainly devoted to French and deportment, or by such a one as the historical Lady Juliana Berners, of a rather later date, whose leisure hours produced treatises on hunting and hawking, and who would probably have, on behalf of her own sex, echoed the *Monk's* contempt for the prejudice against the participation of the Religious in field-sports:—

"He gave not for that text a pullèd hen
That saith, that hunters be no holy men."

On the other hand, neither did the Mendicant Orders, instituted at a later date purposely to supply what the older Orders, as well as the secular clergy, seemed to have grown incapable of furnishing, any longer satisfy the reason of their being. In the fourteenth century the Dominicans, or Black Friars, who at London dwelt in such magnificence that king and Parliament often preferred a sojourn with them to abiding at Westminster, had in general grown accustomed to concentrate their activity upon the spiritual direction of the higher classes. But though they counted among them Englishmen of eminence (one of these was Chaucer's friend, "the philosophical Strode"), they, in truth, never played a more than secondary part in this country, to whose soil the delicate machinery of the Inquisition, of which they were by choice the managers, was never congenial. Of far greater importance for the population of England at large was the Order of the Franciscans, or (as they were here wont to call themselves or to be called) Minorites or Grey Friars. To them the poor had habitually looked for domestic ministrations, and for the inspiring and consoling eloquence of the pulpit; and they had carried their labors into the midst of the suffering population, not afraid of association with that poverty which they were by their vow themselves bound to espouse, or of contact with the horrors of leprosy and the plague. Departing from the short-sighted policy of their illustrious founder, they had become a learned as well as a ministering and preaching Order; and it was precisely from among them that, at Oxford and elsewhere, sprang a succession of learned monks, whose names are inseparably connected with some of the earliest English growths of philosophical speculation and scientific research. Nor is it possible to doubt that in the middle of the thirteenth century the monks of this Order at Oxford had exercised an appreciable influence upon the beginnings of a political struggle of unequalled importance for the progress of our constitutional life. But in the Franciscans also the fourteenth century witnessed a change, which may be described as a gradual loss of the qualities for which they had been honorably distinguished; and in England, as elsewhere, the spirit of the words which Dante puts into the mouth of St. Francis of Assisi was being verified by his degenerate children:—

"So soft is flesh of mortals, that on earth
A good beginning doth no longer last
Than while an oak may bring its fruit to birth."

Outwardly, indeed, the Grey Friars might still often seem what their predecessors had been, and might thus retain a powerful influence over the unthinking crowd, and to sheer worldlings appear, as heretofore, to represent a troublesome *memento* of unexciting religious obligations; "Preach not," says Chaucer's *Host*,

". . .As friars do in Lent,
That they for our old sins may make us weep,
Nor in such wise thy tale make us to sleep."

But in general men were beginning to suspect the motives as well as to deride the practices of the Friars, to accuse them of lying against St. Francis, and to desiderate for them an actual abode of fire, resembling that of which, in their favorite religious shows, they were wont to present the mimic semblance to the multitude. It was they who became in England, as elsewhere, the purveyors of charms and the organizers of pious frauds, while the learning for which their Order had been famous was withering away into the yellow leaf of scholasticism. The Friar in general became the common butt of literary satire; and though the populace still remained true to its favorite guides, a reaction was taking place in favor of the secular as against the regular clergy in the sympathies of the higher classes, and in the spheres of society most open to intellectual influences. The monks and the London multitude were at one time united against John of Gaunt, but it was from the ranks of the secular clergy that Wyclif came forth to challenge the ascendency of Franciscan scholasticism in his university. Meanwhile the poet who in the *Poor Parson of the Town* paints his ideal of a Christian minister—simple, poor, and devoted to his holy work—has nothing but contempt for the friars at large, and for the whole machinery worked by them, half effete, and half spasmodic, and altogether sham. In King Arthur's time, says that accurate and unprejudiced observer, the *Wife of Bath*, the land was filled with fairies —*now* it is filled with friars as thick as motes in the beam of the sun. Among them there is the *Pardoner—i. e.*, seller of pardons (indulgences)—with his "haughty" sermons, delivered "by rote" to congregation after congregation in the self-same words, and everywhere accompanied by the self-same tricks of anecdotes and jokes—with his Papal credentials, and with the pardons he has brought from Rome "all hot"—and with precious relics to rejoice the hearts of the faithful, and to fill his own pockets with the proceeds: to wit, a pillowcase covered with the veil of Our Lady, and a piece of the sail of the ship in which St. Peter went out fishing on the Lake of Gennesareth. This worthy, who lays bare his own motives with unparalleled cynical brutality, is manifestly drawn from the life; or the portrait could not have been accepted which was presented alike by Chaucer, and by his contemporary Langland, and (a century and a half later) in the plagiarism of the orthodox Catholic John Heywood. There, again, is the *Limitour*, a friar licensed to beg, and to hear confession and grant absolution, within the *limits* of a certain district. He is described by Chaucer with so much humor that one can hardly suspect much exaggeration in the sketch. In him we have the truly popular ecclesiastic who springs from the people, lives among the people, and feels with the people. He is the true friend of the poor, and being such, has, as one might say, his finger in every pie; for "a fly and a friar will fall in every dish and every business." His readily-proffered arbitration settles the differences of the humbler classes at the "love-days," a favorite popular practice noted already in the *Vision* of Langland; nor is he a niggard of the mercies which he is privileged to dispense:—

> "Full sweetly did he hear confessión,
> And pleasant was his absolutión.
> He was an easy man to give penánce,
> Whereso wist to have a good pittánce;
> For unto a poor Order for to give,
> Is signë that a man is well y-shrive;
> For if he gave, he durstë make a vaunt
> He wistë that a man was répentant.
> For many a man so hard is of his heart
> He can not weep although he sorely smart.
> Therefore, instead of weeping and of prayers,
> Men must give silver to the poorë Freres.'

Already in the French *Roman de la Rose* the rivalry between the Friars and the Parish Priests is the theme of much satire, evidently unfavorable to the former and favorable to the latter; but in England, where Langland likewise dwells upon the jealousy between them, it was specially accentuated by the assaults of Wyclif upon the Mendicant

Orders. Wyclif's Simple Priests, who at first ministered with the approval of the Bishops, differed from the Mendicants—first, by not being beggars; and, secondly, by being poor. They might, perhaps, have themselves ultimately played the part of a new Order in England, had not Wyclif himself, by rejecting the cardinal dogma of the Church, severed these followers of his from its organism and brought about their suppression. The question as to Chaucer's own attitude towards the Wycliffite movement will be more conveniently touched upon below; but the tone is unmistakable of the references or allusions to Lollardy which he occasionally introduces into the mouth of his *Host*, whose voice is that *vox populi* which the upper and middle classes so often arrogate to themselves. Whatever those classes might desire, it was not to have "cockles sown" by unauthorized intruders "in the corn" of their ordinary instruction. Thus there is a tone of genuine attachment to the "vested interest" principle, and of aversion from all such interlopers as lay preachers and the like, in the *Host's* exclamation, uttered after the *Reeve* has been (in his own style) "sermoning" on the topic of old age:—

> "What availeth all this wit?
> What? should we speak all day of Holy Writ?
> The devil surely made a reeve to preach;"

for which he is as well suited as a cobbler would be for turning mariner or physician!

Thus, then, in the England of Chaucer's days we find the Church still in possession of vast temporal wealth and of great power and privileges—as well as of means for enforcing unity of profession which the legislation of the Lancastrian dynasty, stimulated by the prevailing fears of heresy, was still further to increase, On the other hand, we find the influence of the clergy over the minds of the people diminished, though not extinguished. This was, in the case of the higher secular clergy, partly attributable to their self-indulgence or neglect of their functions, partly to their having been largely superseded by the Regulars in the control of the religious life of the people. The Orders we find no longer at the height of their influence, but still powerful by their wealth, their numbers, their traditional hold upon the lower classes, and their determination to retain this hold even by habitually resorting to the most dubious of methods. Lastly, we find in the lower secular clergy, and doubtless may also assume it to have lingered among some of the regular, some of the salt left whose savor consists in a single-minded and humble resolution to maintain the highest standard of a religious life. But such "clerks" as these are at no times the most easily found, because it is not they who are always running "unto London, unto St. Paul's," on urgent private affairs. What wonder that the real teaching of Wyclif, of which the full significance could hardly be understood but by a select few, should have virtually fallen dead upon his generation, to which the various agitations and agitators, often mingling ideas of religious reform with social and political grievances, seemed to be identical in character and alike to require suppression! In truth, of course, these movements and their agents were often very different from one another in their ends, and were not to be suppressed by the same processes.

It should not be forgotten that in this century learning was, though only very gradually, ceasing to be a possession of the clergy alone. Much doubt remains as to the extent of education—if a little reading and less writing deserve the name—among the higher classes in this period of our national life. A cheering sign appears in the circumstance that the legal deeds of this age begin to bear signatures, and a reference to John of Trevisa would bear out Hallam's conjecture, that in the year 1400 "the average instruction of an English gentleman of the first class would comprehend common reading and writing, a considerable knowledge of French, and a slight tincture of Latin." Certain it is that in this century the barren teaching of the Universities advanced but little towards the true end of all academical teaching—the encouragement and spread of the highest forms of national culture. To what use could a gentleman of Edward III.'s or Richard II.'s day have put the acquirements of a *Clerk of Oxenford* in Aristotelian logic, supplemented perhaps by a knowledge of Priscian, and the rhetorical works of Cicero? Chaucer's scholar, however much his learned modesty of manner and sententious brevity of speech may commend him to our sympathy and taste, is a man wholly out of the world in which he lives, though a dependent on its charity even for the means with which to purchase more of his beloved books. Probably no trustworthier conclusions as to the literary learning and studies of those days are to be derived from any other source than from a comparison of the few catalogues of contemporary libraries remaining to us; and these help to show that the century was approaching its close before a few sparse rays of the first dawn of the Italian Renascence reached England. But this ray was communicated neither through the clergy nor through the Universities; and such influence as was exercised by it upon the national mind was directly due to profane poets—men of the world, who, like Chaucer, quoted authorities even more abundantly than they used them, and made some of their happiest discoveries after the fashion in which the *Oxford Clerk* came across Petrarch's Latin version of the story of Patient Grissel: as it were by accident. There is only too ample a justification for leaving aside the records of the history of learning in England during the latter half of the fourteenth century in any sketch of the main influences which in that period determined or effected the national progress. It was not by his theological learning that Wyclif was brought into living contact with the current of popular thought and feeling. The Universities were thriving exceedingly on the scholastic glories of previous ages; but the ascendency was passing away to which Oxford had attained over Paris—during the earlier middle ages, and again in the fifteenth century until the advent of the Renascence, the central university of Europe in the favorite study of scholastic philosophy and theology.

But we must turn from particular classes and ranks of men to the whole body of the population, exclusively of that great section of it which unhappily lay outside the observation of any but a very few writers, whether poets or historians. In the people at large we may, indeed, easily discern in this period the signs of an advance towards that self-government which is the true foundation of our national greatness. But, on the other hand, it is impossible not to observe how, while the moral ideas of the people were still under the control of the Church, the State in its turn still ubiquitously interfered in the settlement of the conditions of social existence, fixing prices, controlling personal expenditure, regulating wages. Not until England had fully attained to the character of a commercial country, which it was coming gradually to assume, did its inhabitants begin to understand the value of that which has gradually come to distinguish ours among the nations of Europe, viz., the right of individual Englishmen, as well as of the English people, to manage their own affairs for themselves. This may help to explain what can hardly fail to strike a reader of Chaucer and of the few contemporary remains of our literature. About our national life in this period, both in its virtues and in its vices, there is something—it matters little whether we call it—childlike or childish; in its "apert" if not in its "privy" sides it lacks the seriousness belonging to men and to generations, who have learnt to control themselves, instead of relying on the control of others.

In illustration of this assertion, appeal might be made to several of the most salient features in the social life of the period. The extravagant expenditure in dress, fostered by a love of pageantry of various kinds encouraged by both chivalry and the Church, has been already referred to; it was by no means distinctive of any one class of the population. Among the friars who went about preaching homilies on the people's favorite vices some humorous rogues may, like the *Pardoner* of the *Canterbury Tales*, have made a point of treating their own favorite vice as their one and unchangeable text:—

"My theme is always one, and ever was:
Radix malorum est cupiditas."

But others preferred to dwell on specifically lay sins; and these moralists occasionally attributed to the love of expenditure on dress the impoverishment of the kingdom, forgetting, in their ignorance of political economy and defiance of common sense, that this result was really due to the endless foreign wars. Yet, in contrast with the pomp and ceremony of life, upon which so great an amount of money and time and thought was wasted, are noticeable shortcomings by no means uncommon in the case of undeveloped civilisations (as, for instance, among the most typically childish or childlike nationalities of the Europe of our own day), viz., discomfort and uncleanliness of all sorts. To this may be added the excessive fondness for sports and pastimes of all kinds, in which nations are aptest to indulge before or after the era of their highest efforts—the desire to make life one long holiday, dividing it between tournaments and the dalliance of courts of love, or between archery-meetings (skilfully substituted by royal command for less useful exercises), and the seductive company of "tumblers," "fruiterers," and "waferers." Furthermore, one may notice in all classes a far from eradicated inclination to superstitions of every kind—whether those encouraged or those discouraged* by the Church—an inclination unfortunately fostered rather than checked by the uncertain gropings of contemporary science. Hence, the credulous acceptance of relics like those sold by the *Pardoner*, and of legends like those related to Chaucer's Pilgrims by the *Prioress* (one of the numerous repetitions of a cruel calumny against the Jews), and by the *Second Nun* (the supra-sensual story of Saint Cecilia). Hence, on the other hand, the greedy hunger for the marvels of astrology and alchemy, notwithstanding the growing scepticism even of members of a class represented by Chaucer's *Franklin* towards

> ". . . Such folly
> As in our days is not held worth a fly,"

and notwithstanding the exposure of fraud by repentant or sickened accomplices, such as the gold-making *Canon's Yeoman*. Hence, again, the vitality of such quasi-scientific fancies as the magic mirror, of which miraculous instrument the *Squire's* "half-told story" describes a specimen, referring to the incontestable authority of Aristotle and others, who write "in their lives" concerning quaint mirrors and perspective glasses, as is well known to those who have "heard the books" of these sages. Hence, finally, the corresponding tendency to eschew the consideration of serious religious questions, and to leave them to clerks, as if they were crabbed problems of theology. For, in truth, while the most fertile and fertilizing ideas of the Middle Ages had exhausted, or were rapidly coming to exhaust, their influence upon the people, the forms of the doctrines of the Church—even of the most stimulative as well as of the most solemn among them—had grown hard and stiff. To those who received, if not to those who taught, these doctrines they seemed alike lifeless, unless translated into the terms of the merest earthly transactions or the language of purely human relations. And thus, paradoxical as it might seem, cool-headed and conscientious rulers of the Church thought themselves on occasion called upon to restrain rather than to stimulate the religious ardor of the multitude—fed as the flame was by very various materials. Perhaps no more characteristic narrative has come down to us from the age of the poet of the *Canterbury Tales* than the story of Bishop (afterwards Archbishop) Sudbury and the Canterbury Pilgrims. In the year 1370 the land was agitated through its length and breadth, on the occasion of the fourth jubilee of the national saint, Thomas the Martyr. The pilgrims were streaming in numbers along the familiar Kentish road, when, on the very vigil of the feast, one of their companies was accidentally met by the Bishop of London. They demanded his blessing; but, to their astonishment and indignation, he seized the occasion to read a lesson to the crowd on the uselessness to unrepentant sinners of the plenary indulgences, for the sake of which they were wending their way to the Martyr's shrine. The rage of the multitude found a mouthpiece in a soldier, who loudly upbraided the Bishop for stirring up the people against St. Thomas, and warned him that a shameful death would befall him in consequence. The multitude shouted *Amen*—and one is left to wonder whether any of the pious pilgrims who resented Bishop Sudbury's manly truthfulness swelled the mob which eleven years later butchered "the plunderer," as it called him, "of the Commons." It is such glimpses as this which show us how important the Church had become towards the people. Worse was to ensue before the better came; in the mean time, the nation was in that stage of its existence when the innocence of the child was fast losing itself, without the self-control of the man having yet taken its place.

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* "For holy Church's faith, in our belief,
Suffereth no illusion us to grieve."
The Franklin's Tale.

But the heart of England was sound the while. The national spirit of enterprise was not dead in any class, from knight to shipman; and faithfulness and chastity in woman were still esteemed the highest though not the universal virtues of her sex. The value of such evidence as the mind of a great poet speaking in his works furnishes for a knowledge of the times to which he belongs is inestimable; for it shows us what has survived, as well as what was doomed to decay, in the life of the nation with which that mind was in sensitive sympathy. And it therefore seemed not inappropriate to approach, in the first instance, from this point of view, the subject of this biographical essay—Chaucer, "the poet of the dawn:" for in him there are many things significant of the age of transition in which he lived; in him the mixture of Frenchman and Englishman is still in a sense incomplete, as that of their language is in the diction of his poems. His gayety of heart is hardly English; nor is his willing (though, to be sure, not invariably unquestioning) acceptance of forms into the inner meaning of which he does not greatly vex his soul by entering; nor his airy way of ridiculing what he has no intention of helping to overthrow; nor his light unconcern in the question whether he is, or is not, an immoral writer. Or, at least, in all of these things he has no share in qualities and tendencies, which influences and conflicts unknown to and unforeseen by him may be safely said to have ultimately made characteristic of Englishmen. But he *is* English in his freedom and frankness of spirit; in his manliness of mind; in his preference for the good in things as they are to the good in things as they might be; in his loyalty, his piety, his truthfulness. Of the great movement which was to mould the national character for at least a long series of generations he displays no serious foreknowledge; and of the elements already preparing to affect the course of that movement he shows a very incomplete consciousness. But of the health and strength which, after struggles many and various, made that movement possible and made it victorious, he, more than any one of his contemporaries, is the living type and the speaking witness. Thus, like the times to which he belongs, he stands half in and half out of the Middle Ages, half in and half out of a phase of our national life, which we can never hope to understand more than partially and imperfectly. And it is this, taken together with the fact that he is the first English poet to read whom is to enjoy him, and that he garnished not only our language but our literature with blossoms still adorning them in vernal freshness—which makes Chaucer's figure so unique a one in the gallery of our great English writers, and gives to his works an interest so inexhaustible for the historical as well as for the literary student.

CHAPTER II.

CHAUCER'S LIFE AND WORKS.

SOMETHING has been already said as to the conflict of opinion concerning the period of Geoffrey Chaucer's birth, the precise date of which is very unlikely ever to be ascertained. A better fortune has attended the anxious enquiries which in his case, as in those of other great men, have been directed to the very secondary question of ancestry and descent—a question to which, in the abstract at all events, no man ever attached less importance than he. Although the name *Chaucer* is (according to Thynne) to be found on the lists of Battle Abbey, this no more proves that the poet himself came of "high parage," than the reverse is to be concluded from the nature of his coat-of-arms, which Speght thought must have been taken out of the 27th and 28th Propositions of the First Book of Euclid. Many a warrior of the Norman Conquest was known to his comrades only by the name of the trade which he had plied in some French or Flemish town, before he attached himself a volunteer to Duke William's holy and lucrative expedition; and it is doubtful whether, even in the fourteenth century, the name *Le Chaucer* is, wherever it occurs in London, used as a surname, or whether, in some instances, it is not merely a designation of the owner's trade. Thus we should not be justified in assuming a French origin for the family from which Richard le Chaucer, whom we know to have been the poet's grandfather, was descended. Whether or not he was at any time a shoemaker (*chaucier*, maker of *chausses*), and accordingly belonged to a gentle craft otherwise not unassociated with the history of poetry, Richard was a citizen of London, and vintner, like his son John after him. John Chaucer, whose wife's Christian name may be with tolerable safety set down as Agnes, owned a house in Thames Street, London, not far from the arch on which modern pilgrims pass by rail to Canterbury or beyond, and in the neighborhood of the great bridge, which in Chaucer's own day emptied its travellers on their errands, sacred or profane, into the great Southern road, the *Via Appia* of England. The house afterwards descended to John's son, GEOFFREY, who released his right to it by deed in the year 1380. Chaucer's father was probably a man of some substance, the most usual personal recommendation to great people in one of his class. For he was at least temporarily connected with the Court, inasmuch as he attended King Edward III. and Queen Philippa on the memorable journey to Flanders and Germany, in the course of which the English monarch was proclaimed Vicar of the Holy Roman Empire on the left bank of the Rhine. John Chaucer died in 1366, and in course of time his widow married another citizen and vintner. Thomas Heyroun, John Chaucer's brother of the half-blood, was likewise a member of the same trade; so that the young Geoffrey was certainly not brought up in an atmosphere of abstinence. The *Host* of the *Canterbury Tales*, though he takes his name from an actual personage, may therefore have in him touches of a family portrait; but Chaucer himself nowhere displays any traces of a hereditary devotion to Bacchus, and makes so experienced a practitioner as the *Pardoner* the mouthpiece of as witty an invective against drunkenness as has been uttered by any assailant of our existing licensing laws. Chaucer's own practice, as well as his opinion on this head, is sufficiently expressed in the characteristic words he puts into the mouth of Cressid:—

> "In everything, I wot, there lies measúre:
> For though a man forbid all drunkenness,
> He biddeth not that every créature
> Be drinkless altogether, as I guess."

Of Geoffrey Chaucer we know nothing whatever from the day of his birth (whenever it befell) to the year 1357. His earlier biographers, who supposed him to have been born in 1328, had accordingly a fair field open for conjecture and speculation. Here it must suffice to risk the asseveration that he cannot have accompanied his father to Cologne in 1338, and on that occasion have been first "taken notice of" by king and queen, if he was not born till two or more years afterwards. If, on the other hand, he was born in 1328, both events *may* have taken place. On neither supposition is there any reason for believing that he studied at one—or at both—of our English universities.

The poem cannot be accepted as Chaucerian, the author of which (very possibly by a mere dramatic assumption) declares :—

> "Philogenet I call'd am far and near,
> Of Cambridge clerk ;"

nor can any weight be attached to the circumstance that the *Clerk*, who is one of the most delightful figures among the Canterbury Pilgrims, is an Oxonian. The enticing enquiry as to *which* of the sister universities may claim Chaucer as her own must, therefore, be allowed to drop, together with the subsidiary question, whether stronger evidence of local coloring is furnished by the *Miller's* picture of the life of a poor scholar in lodgings at Oxford, or by the *Reeve's* rival narrative of the results of a Trumpington walk taken by two undergraduates of the "Solar Hall" at Cambridge. Equally baseless is the supposition of one of Chaucer's earliest biographers, that he completed his academical studies at Paris—and equally futile the concomitant fiction that in France "he acquired much applause by his literary exercises." Finally we have the tradition that he was a member of the Inner Temple—which is a conclusion deduced from a piece of genial scandal as to a record having been seen in that inn of a fine imposed upon him for beating a friar in Fleet Street. This story was early placed by Thynne on the horns of a sufficiently decisive dilemma : in the days of Chaucer's youth, lawyers had not yet been admitted into the Temple; and in the days of his maturity he is not very likely to have been found engaged in battery in a London thoroughfare.

We now desert the region of groundless conjecture, in order with the year 1357, to arrive at a firm though not very broad footing of facts. In this year "Geoffrey Chaucer" (whom it would be too great an effort of scepticism to suppose to have been merely a namesake of the poet) is mentioned in the Household Book of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster, wife of Prince Lionel (third son of King Edward III., and afterwards Duke of Clarence), as a recipient of certain articles of apparel. Two similar notices of his name occur up to the year 1359. He is hence concluded to have belonged to Prince Lionel's establishment as squire or page to the Lady Elizabeth ; and it was probably in the Prince's retinue that he took part in the expedition of King Edward III. into France, which began at the close of the year 1359 with the ineffectual siege of Rheims, and in the next year, after a futile attempt upon Paris, ended with the compromise of the Peace of Brétigny. In the course of this campaign Chaucer was taken prisoner ; but he was released without much loss of time, as appears by a document bearing date March 1st, 1360, in which the King contributes the sum of 16*l.* for Chaucer's ransom. We may, therefore, conclude that he missed the march upon Paris, and the sufferings undergone by the English army on their road thence to Chartres—the most exciting experiences of an inglorious campaign ; and that he was actually set free by the Peace. When, in the year 1367, we next meet with his name in authentic records, his earliest known patron, the Lady Elizabeth, is dead; and he has passed out of the service of Prince Lionel into that of King Edward himself, as Valet of whose Chamber or household he receives a yearly salary for life of twenty marks, for his former and future services. Very possibly he had quitted Prince Lionel's service when, in 1361, that Prince had, by reason of his marriage with the heiress of Ulster, been appointed to the Irish government by his father, who was supposed at one time to have destined him to the Scottish throne.

Concerning the doings of Chaucer in the interval between his liberation from his French captivity and the first notice of him as Valet of the King's Chamber we know nothing at all. During these years, however, no less important a personal event than his marriage was by earlier biographers supposed to have occurred. On the other hand, according to the view which commends itself to several eminent living commentators of the poet, it was not courtship and marriage, but a hopeless and unrequited passion, which absorbed these years of his life. Certain stanzas in which, as they think, he gave utterance to this passion are by them ascribed to one of these years; so that, if their view were correct, the poem in question would have to be regarded as the earliest of his extant productions. The problem which we have indicated must detain us for a moment.

It is attested by documentary evidence that in the year 1374 Chaucer had a wife by name Philippa, who had been in the service of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and of his Duchess (doubtless his second wife Constance), as well as in that of his mother, the good Queen Philippa, and who on several occasions afterwards, besides special new-years gifts of silver-gilt cups from the Duke, received her annual pension of ten marks through her husband. It is likewise proved that, in 1366, a pension of ten marks was granted to *a* Philippa Chaucer, one of the ladies of the Queen's Chamber. Obviously, it is a highly probable assumption that these two Philippa Chaucers were one and the same persons; but in the absence of any direct proof it is impossible to affirm as certain, or to deny as demonstrably untrue, that the Philippa Chaucer of 1366 owed her surname to marriage. Yet the view was long held, and is still maintained by writers of knowledge and insight, that the Philippa of 1366 was at that date Chaucer's wife. In or before that year he married, it was said, Philippa Roet, daughter of Sir Paon de Roet of Hainault, Guienne King of Arms, who came to England in Queen Philippa's retinue in 1328. This tradition derived special significance from the fact that another daughter of Sir Paon, Katharine, widow of Sir Hugh Swynford, was successively governess, mistress, and (third) wife to the Duke of Lancaster, to whose service both Geoffrey and Philippa Chaucer were at one time attached. It was apparently founded on the circumstance that Thomas Chaucer, the supposed son of the poet, quartered the Roet arms with his own. But unfortunately there is no evidence to show that Thomas

Chaucer was a son of Geoffrey; and the superstructure must needs vanish with its basis. It being then no longer indispensable to assume Chaucer to have been a married man in 1366, the Philippa Chaucer of that year *may* have been only a namesake, and possibly a relative, of Geoffrey; for there were other Chaucers in London besides him and his father (who died this year), and one Chaucer at least has been found who was well-to-do enough to have a Damsel of the Queen's Chamber for his daughter in these certainly not very exclusive times.

There is, accordingly, no *proof* that Chaucer was a married man before 1374, when he is known to have received a pension for his own and his wife's services. But with this negative result we are asked not to be poor-spirited enough to rest content. At the opening of his *Book of the Duchess*, a poem certainly written towards the end of the year 1369, Chaucer makes use of certain expressions, both very pathetic and very definite. The most obvious interpretation of the lines in question seems to be that they contain the confession of a hopeless passion, which has lasted for eight years—a confession which certainly seems to come more appropriately and more naturally from an unmarried than from a married man. "For eight years," he says, or seems to say, "I have loved, and loved in vain—and yet my cure is never the nearer. There is but one physician that can heal me—but all that is ended and done with. Let us pass on into fresh fields; what cannot be obtained must needs be left." It seems impossible to interpret this passage (too long to cite *in extenso*) as a complaint of married life. Many other poets have, indeed, complained of their married lives, and Chaucer (if the view to be advanced below be correct) as emphatically as any. But though such occasional exclamations of impatience or regret—more especially when in a comic vein—may receive pardon, or even provoke amusement, yet a serious and sustained poetic version of Sterne's "*sum multum fatigatus de uxore mea*" would be unbearable in any writer of self-respect, and wholly out of character in Chaucer. Even Byron only indited elegies about his married life after his wife *had left him*.

Now, among Chaucer's minor poems is preserved one called the *Complaint of the Death of Pity*, which purports to set forth "how pity is dead and buried in a gentle heart," and, after testifying to a hopeless passion, ends with the following declaration, addressed to Pity, as in a "bill" or letter:—

> "This is to say: I will be yours for ever,
> Though ye me slay by Cruelty, your foe;
> Yet shall my spirit nevermore dissever
> From your service, for any pain or woe,
> Pity, whom I have sought so long ago!
> Thus for your death I may well weep and plain,
> With heart all sore, and full of busy pain."

If this poem be autobiographical, it would indisputably correspond well enough to a period in Chaucer's life, and to a mood of mind preceding those to which the introduction to the *Book of the Duchess* belongs. If it be not autobiographical—and in truth there is nothing to prove it such, so that an attempt has been actually made to suggest its having been intended to apply to the experiences of another man—then the *Complaint of Pity* has no special value for students of Chaucer, since its poetic beauty, as there can be no harm in observing, is not in itself very great.

To come to an end of this topic, there seems no possibility of escaping from one of the following alternatives: *Either* the Philippa Chaucer of 1366 was Geoffrey Chaucer's wife, whether or not she was Philippa Roet before marriage, and the lament of 1369 had reference to another lady—an assumption to be regretted in the case of a married man, but not out of the range of possibility. *Or*—and this seems, on the whole, the most probable view—the Philippa Chaucer of 1366 was a namesake whom Geoffrey married some time after 1369—possibly (of course only *possibly*) the very lady whom he had loved hopelessly for eight years, and persuaded himself that he had at last relinquished, and who had then relented after all. This last conjecture it is certainly difficult to reconcile with the conclusion at which we arrive on other grounds, that Chaucer's married life was not one of preponderating bliss. That he and his wife were *cousins* is a pleasing thought, but one which is not made more pleasing by the seeming fact that, if they were so related, marriage in their case failed to draw close that hearts' bond which such kinship at times half unconsciously knits.

Married or still a bachelor, Chaucer may fairly be supposed, during part of the years previous to that in which we find him securely established in the King's service, to have enjoyed a measure of independence and leisure open to few men in his rank of life, when once the golden days of youth and early manhood have passed away. Such years are in many men's lives marked by the projection, or even by the partial accomplishment, of literary undertakings on a large scale, and more especially of such as partake of an imitative character. When a juvenile and facile writer's taste is still unsettled, and his own style is as yet unformed, he eagerly tries his hand at the reproduction of the work of others; translates the *Iliad* or *Faust*, or suits himself with unsuspecting promptitude to the production of masques, or pastorals, or life dramas—or whatever may be the prevailing fashion in poetry—after the manner of the favorite literary models of the day. *A priori*, therefore, everything is in favor of the belief hitherto universally entertained, that among Chaucer's earliest poetical productions was the extant English translation of the French *Roman de la Rose*. That he made *some* translation of this poem is a fact resting on his own statement in a passage indisputably written by him (in the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*); nor is the value of this statement reduced by the negative circumstance, that in the extraordinary tag (if it may be called by so irreverent a name) to the extant *Canterbury Tales*, the *Romaunt of the Rose* is passed over in silence, or at least not nominally mentioned, among the objectionable works which the poet is there made to retract. And there seems at least no necessity for giving in to the conclusion that Chaucer's translation has been lost, and was not that which has been hitherto accepted as his. For this conclusion is based upon the use of a formal test, which, in truth, need not be regarded as of itself absolutely decisive in any case, but which in this particular instance need not be held applicable at all. A particular rule against rhyming with one another particular sounds, which in his later poems Chaucer seems invariably to have followed, need not have been observed by him in what was actually, or all but, his earliest. The unfinished state of the extant translation accords with the supposition that Chaucer broke it off on adopting (possibly after conference with Gower, who likewise observes the rule) a more logical practice as to the point in question. Moreover, no English translation of this poem besides Chaucer's is ever known to have existed.

Whither should the youthful poet, when in search of materials on which to exercise a ready but as yet untrained hand, have so naturally turned as to French poetry, and in its domain whither so eagerly as to its universally acknowledged master-piece? French verse was the delight of the Court, into the service of which he was about this time preparing permanently to enter, and with which he had been more or less connected from his boyhood. In French, Chaucer's contemporary Gower composed not only his first longer work, but not less than fifty ballads or sonnets; and in French (as well as in English) Chaucer himself may have possibly in his youth set his own 'prentice hand to the turning of "*ballades*, *rondels*, *virelayes*." The time had not yet arrived, though it was not far distant, when his English verse was to attest his admiration of Machault, whose fame Froissart and Froissart's imitations had brought across from the French Court to the English, and when Gransson, who served King Richard II. as a squire, was extolled by his English adapter as the "flower of them that write in France." But as yet Chaucer's own tastes, his French blood, if he had any in his veins, and the familiarity with the French tongue which he had already had opportunities of acquiring, were more likely to commend to him productions of broader literary merits and a wider popularity. From these points of view, in the days of Chaucer's youth, there was no rival to the *Roman de la Rose*, one of those rare works on which the literary history of whole generations and centuries may be said to hinge. The Middle Ages, in which, from various causes, the literary intercommunication between the nations of Europe was in some respects far livelier than it has been in later times, witnessed the appearance of several such works—diverse in kind, but similar to one another in the universality of their popularity: the *Consolation of Philosophy*, the *Divine Comedy*, the *Imitation of Christ*, the *Roman de la Rose*, the *Ship of Fools*. The favor enjoyed by the *Roman de la Rose* was in some ways the most extraordinary of all. In France, this work remained the dominant work of poetic literature, and "the source whence every rhymer drew for his needs" down to the period of the classical revival led by Ronsard (when it was edited by Clement Marot, Spenser's early model). In England, it exercised an influence only inferior to that which belonged to it at home upon both the matter and the form of poetry down to the renascence begun by Surrey and Wyatt. This extraordinary literary influence admits of a double explanation. But just as the authorship of the poem was very unequally divided between two personages, wholly divergent in their purposes as writers, so the *popularity* of the poem is probably in the main to be attributed to the second and later of the pair.

To the *trouvère* Guillaume de Lorris (who took his name from a small town in the valley of the Loire) was due the original conception of the *Roman de la Rose*, for which it is needless to suspect any extraneous source. To novelty of subject he added great ingenuity of treatment. Instead of a narrative of warlike adventures he offered to his readers a psychological romance, in which a combination of symbolisations and personified abstractions supplied the characters of the moral conflict represented. Bestiaries and Lapidaries had familiarized men's minds with the art of finding a symbolical significance in particular animals and stones; and the language of poets was becoming a language of flowers. On the other hand, the personification of abstract qualities was a usage largely affected by the Latin writers of the earlier Middle Ages, and formed a favorite device of the monastic beginnings of the Christian drama. For both these literary fashions, which mildly exercised the ingenuity while deeply gratifying the tastes of mediæval readers, room was easily found by Guillaume de Lorris within a framework in itself both appropriate and graceful. He told (as reproduced by his English translator) how in a dream he seemed to himself to wake up on a May morning. Sauntering forth, he came to a garden surrounded by a wall, on which were depicted many unkindly figures, such as Hate and Villainy, and Avarice and Old Age, and another thing

"That seemèd like a hypocrite,
And it was clepèd pope holy."

Within all seemed so delicious that, feeling ready to give an hundred pound for the chance of entering, he smote at a small wicket, and was admitted by a courteous maiden named Idleness. On the sward in the garden were dancing its owner, Sir Mirth, and a company of friends; and by the side of Gladness the dreamer saw the God of Love and his attendant, a bachelor named Sweet-looking, who bore two bows, each with five arrows. Of these bows the one was straight and fair, and the other crooked and unsightly, and each of the arrows bore the name of some quality or emotion by which love is advanced or hindered. And as the dreamer was gazing into the spring of Narcissus (the imagination), he beheld a rose-tree "charged full of roses," and, becoming enamored of one of them, eagerly advanced to pluck the object of his passion. In the midst of this attempt he was struck by arrow upon arrow, shot "wonder smart" by Love from the strong bow. The arrow called Company completes the victory; the dreaming poet becomes the Lover (*L'Amant*), and swears allegiance to the God of Love, who proceeds to instruct him in his laws; and the real action (if it is to be called such) of the poem begins. This consists in the Lover's desire to possess himself of the Rosebud, the opposition offered to him by powers both good and evil, and by Reason in particular, and the support which he receives from more or less discursive friends. Clearly, the conduct of such a scheme as this admits of being varied in many ways and protracted to any length; but its first conception is easy and natural, and, when it was novel to boot, was neither commonplace nor ill-chosen.

After writing about one-fifth of the 22,000 verses of which the original French poem consists, Guillaume de Lorris, who had executed his part of the task in full sympathy with the spirit of the chivalry of his times, died, and left the work to be continued by another *trouvère*, Jean de Meung (so called from the town, near Lorris, in which he lived). "Hobbling John" took up the thread of his predecessor's poem in the spirit of a wit and an encyclopædist. Indeed, the latter appellation suits him in both its special and its general sense. Beginning with a long dialogue between Reason and the Lover, he was equally anxious to display his freedom of criticism and his universality of knowledge, both scientific and anecdotical. His vein was pre-eminently satirical and abundantly allusive; and among the chief objects of his satire are the two favorite themes of mediæval satire in general, religious hypocrisy (personified in *Faux-Semblant*, who has been described as one of the ancestors of *Tartuffe*), and the foibles of women. To the gross salt of Jean de Meung, even more than to the courtly perfume of Guillaume de Lorris, may be ascribed the long-lived popularity of the *Roman de la Rose;* and thus a work, of which already the theme and first conception imply a great step forwards from the previous range of mediæval poetry, became a favorite with all classes by reason of the piquancy of its flavor, and the quotable applicability of many of its passages. Out of a chivalrous allegory Jean de Meung had made a popular satire; and though in its completed form it could look for no welcome in many a court or castle—though Petrarch despised it, and Gerson, in the name of the Church, recorded a protest against it—and though a bevy of offended ladies had well-nigh taken the law into their own hands against its author—yet it commanded a vast public of admirers. And against such a popularity even an offended clergy, though aided by the sneers of the fastidious and the vehemence of the fair, is wont to contend in vain.

Chaucer's translation of this poem is thought to have been the cause which called forth from Eustace Deschamps, Machault's pupil and nephew, the complimentary *ballade* in the refrain of which the Englishman is saluted as

> "Grant translateur, noble Geffroi Chaucier."

But whether or not such was the case, his version of the *Roman de la Rose* seems, on the whole, to be a translation properly so called—although, considering the great number of MSS. existing of the French original, it would probably be no easy task to verify the assertion that in one or the other of these are to be found the few passages thought to have been interpolated by Chaucer. On the other hand, his omissions are extensive; indeed, the whole of his translation amounts to little more than one-third of the French original. It is all the more noteworthy that Chaucer reproduces only about one-half of the part contributed by Jean de Meung, and again condenses this half to one-third of its length. In general, he has preserved the French names of localities, and even occasionally helps himself to a rhyme by retaining a French word. Occasionally he shows a certain timidity as a translator, speaking of "the tree which in France men call a pine," and pointing out, so that there may be no mistake, that mermaidens are called "sereyns" (*sirènes*) in France. On the other hand, his natural vivacity now and then suggests to him a turn of phrase or an illustration of his own. As a loyal English courtier he cannot compare a fair bachelor to any one so aptly as to "the lord's son of Windsor;" and as writing not far from the time when the Statute of Kilkenny was passed, he cannot lose the opportunity of inventing an Irish parentage for Wicked-Tongue:

"So full of cursèd rage
It well agreed with his lineáge;
For him an Irishwoman bare."

The debt which Chaucer in his later works owed to the *Roman of the Rose* was considerable, and by no means confined to the favorite May-morning exordium and the recurring machinery of a vision—to the origin of which latter (the dream of Scipio related by Cicero and expounded in the widely-read. Commentary of Macrobius) the opening lines of the *Romaunt* point. He owes to the French poem both the germs of felicitous phrases, such as the famous designation of Nature as "the Vicar of the Almighty Lord," and perhaps touches used by him in passages like that in which he afterwards, with further aid from other sources, drew the character of a true gentleman. But the main service which the work of this translation rendered to him was the opportunity which it offered of practising and perfecting a ready and happy choice of words—a service in which, perhaps, lies the chief use of all translation, considered as an exercise of style. How far he had already advanced in this respect, and how lightly our language was already moulding itself in his hands, may be seen from several passages in the poem; for instance, from that about the middle, where the old and new theme of self-contradictoriness of love is treated in endless variations. In short, Chaucer executed his task with facility, and frequently with grace, though, for one reason or another, he grew tired of it before he had carried it out with completeness. Yet the translation (and this may have been among the causes why he seems to have wearied of it) has, notwithstanding, a certain air of schoolwork; and though Chaucer's next poem, to which incontestable evidence assigns the date of the year 1369, is still very far from being wholly original, yet the step is great from the *Romaunt of the Rose* to the *Book of the Duchess.*

Among the passages of the French *Roman de la Rose* omitted in Chaucer's translation are some containing critical reflections on the character of kings and constituted authorities—a species of observations which kings and constituted authorities have never been notorious for loving. This circumstance, together with the reference to Windsor quoted above, suggests the probability that Chaucer's connection with the Court had not been interrupted, or had been renewed, or was on the eve of renewing itself, at the time when wrote this translation. In becoming a courtier he was certainly placed within the reach of social opportunities such as in his day he could nowhere else have enjoyed. In England as well as in Italy, during the fourteenth and the two following centuries, as the frequent recurrence of the notion attests, the "good" courtier seemed the perfection of the idea of gentleman. At the same time, exaggerated conceptions of the courtly breeding of Chaucer's and Froissart's age may very easily be formed; and it is almost amusing to contrast with Chaucer's generally liberal notions of manners, severe views of etiquette like that introduced by him at the close of the *Man of Law's Tale,* where he stigmatizes as a solecism the statement of the author from whom he copied his narrative, that King Ælla sent his little boy to invite the emperor to dinner. "It is best to deem he went himself."

The position which in June, 1367, we find Chaucer holding at Court is that of "Valettus" to the King, or, as a later document of May, 1368, has it, of "Valettus Cameræ Regis"—Valet or Yoeman of the King's Chamber. Posts of this kind, which involved the ordinary functions of personal attendance—the making of beds, the holding of torches, the laying of tables, the going on messages, etc.—were usually bestowed upon young men of good family. In due course of time a royal valet usually rose to the higher post of royal squire—either "of the household" generally, or of a more special kind. Chaucer appears in 1368 as an "esquire of less degree," his name standing seventeenth in a list of seven-and-thirty. After the year 1373 he is never mentioned by the lower, but several times by Latin equivalents of the higher, title. Frequent entries occur of the pension or salary of twenty marks granted to him for life; and, as will be seen, he soon began to be employed on missions abroad. He had thus become a regular member of the royal establishment, within the sphere of which we must suppose the associations of the next years of his life to have been confined. They belonged to a period of peculiar significance both for the English people and for the Plantagenet dynasty, whose glittering exploits reflected so much transitory glory on the national arms. At

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home, these years were the brief interval between two of the chief visitations of the Black Death (1361 and 1369); and a few years earlier the poet of the *Vision* had given voice to the sufferings of the poor. It was not, however, the mothers of the people crying for their children whom the courtly singer remembered in his elegy written in the year 1369; the woe to which he gave a poetic expression was that of a princely widower temporarily inconsolable for the loss of his first wife. In 1367 the Black Prince was conquering Castile (to be lost again before the year was out) for that interesting protégé of the Plantagenet and representative of legitimate right, Don Pedro the Cruel, whose daughter the inconsolable widower was to espouse in 1372, and whose "tragic" downfall Chaucer afterwards only lamented in his *Monk's Tale:*—

> "O noble, O worthy Pedro, glory of Spain,
> Whom fortune held so high in majesty!"

As yet the star of the valiant Prince of Wales had not been quenched in the sickness which was the harbinger of death; and his younger brother, John of Gaunt, though already known for his bravery in the field (he commanded the reinforcements sent to Spain in 1367), had scarcely begun to play the prominent part in politics which he was afterwards to fill. But his day was at hand, and the anti-clerical tenor of the legislation and of the administrative changes of these years was in entire harmony with the policy of which he was to constitute himself the representative. 1365 is the year of the Statute of Provisors, and 1371 that of the dissimal of William of Wykeham.

John of Gaunt was born in 1340, and was, therefore, probably of much the same age as Chaucer, and, like him, now in the prime of life. Nothing could, accordingly, be more natural that that a more or less intimate relation should have formed itself between them. This relation, there is reason to believe, afterwards ripened, on Chaucer's part, into one of distinct political partisanship, of which there could as yet (for the reason given above) hardly be a question. There was, however, so far as we know, nothing in Chaucer's tastes and tendencies to render it antecedently unlikely that he should have been ready to follow the fortunes of a prince who entered the political arena as an adversary of clerical predominance. Had Chaucer been a friend of it in principle, he would hardly have devoted his first efforts as a writer to the translation of the *Roman de la Rose.* In so far, therefore—and in truth it is not very far—as John of Gaunt may be afterwards said to have been a Wycliffite, the same description might probably be applied to Chaucer. With such sentiments a personal orthodoxy was fully reconcilable in both patron and follower; and the so-called *Chaucer's A. B. C.*, a version of a prayer to the Virgin in a French poetical "Pilgrimage," might with equal probability have been put together by him either early or late in the course of his life. There was, however, a tradition, repeated by Speght, that this piece was composed "at the request of

Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, as a prayer for her private use, being a woman in her religion very devout." If so, it must have been written before the Duchess's death, which occurred in 1369; and we may imagine it, if we please, with its twenty-three initial letters blazoned in red and blue and gold on a flyleaf inserted in the Book of the pious Duchess—herself, in the fervent language of the poem, an illuminated calendar, as being lighted in this world with the Virgin's holy name.

In the autumn of 1369, then, the Duchess Blanche died an early death; and it is pleasing to know that John of Gaunt, to whom his marriage with her had brought wealth and a dukedom, ordered services, in pious remembrance of her, to be held at her grave. The elaborate elegy which—very possibly at the widowed duke's request—was composed by Chaucer, leaves no doubt as to the identity of the lady whose loss it deplores:—

> " . . . Goodë fairë *White* she hight;
> Thus was my lady namèd right;
> For she was both fair and bright."

But, in accordance with the taste of his age, which shunned such sheer straightforwardness in poetry, the *Book of the Duchess* contains no further transparent reference to the actual circumstances of the wedded life which had come to so premature an end—for John of Gaunt had married Blanche of Lancaster in 1359—and an elaborate framework is constructed round the essential theme of the poem. Already, however, the instinct of Chaucer's own poetic genius had taught him the value of personal directness; and, artificially as the course of the poem is arranged, it begins in the most artless and effective fashion with an account given by the poet of his own sleeplessness and its cause, already referred to—an opening so felicitous that it was afterwards imitated by Froissart. And so, Chaucer continues, as he could not sleep, to drive the night away he sat upright in his bed reading a "romance," which he thought better entertainment than chess or draughts. The book which he read was the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid; and in it he chanced on the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone—the lovers whom, on their premature death, the compassion of Juno changed into the sea-birds that bring good-luck to mariners. Of this story (whether Chaucer derived it direct from Ovid, or from Machault's French version, is disputed), the earlier part serves as the introduction to the poem. The story breaks off—with the dramatic abruptness in which Chaucer is a master, and which so often distinguishes his versions from their originals—at the death of Alcyone, caused by her grief at the tidings brought by Morpheus of her husband's death. Thus subtly the god of sleep and the death of a loving wife mingle their images in the poet's mind; and with these upon him, he falls asleep "right upon his book."

What more natural, after this, than the dream which came to him? It was May, and he lay in his bed at morning-time, having been awakened out of his slumbers by the "small-fowls," who were carolling forth their notes—"some high, some low, and all of one accord." The birds singing their matins around the poet, and the sun shining brightly through his windows stained with many a figure of poetic legend, and upon the walls painted in fine colors, "both text and gloss, and all the Rómaunt of the Rose"—is not this a picture of Chaucer by his own hand, on which one may love to dwell? And just as the poem has begun with a touch of nature, and at the beginning of its main action has returned to nature, so through the whole of its course it maintains the same tone. The sleeper awakened—still, of course, in his dream—hears the sound of the horn, and the noise of huntsmen preparing for the chase. He rises, saddles his horse, and follows to the forest, where the Emperor Octavian (a favorite character of Carolingian legend, and pleasantly revived under this aspect by the modern romanticist, Ludwig Tieck—in Chaucer's poem probably a flattering allegory for the King) is holding his hunt. The deer having been started, the poet is watching the course of the hunt, when he is approached by a dog, which leads him to a solitary spot in a thicket among mighty trees; and here of a sudden he comes upon a man in black, sitting silently by the side of a huge oak. How simple and how charming is the device of the faithful dog acting as a guide into the mournful solitude of the faithful man! For the knight whom the poet finds thus silent and alone, is rehearsing to himself a lay, "a manner song," in these words:—

"I have of sorrow so great wone,
That joyë get I never none,
Now that I see my lady bright,
Which I have loved with all my might,
Is from me dead, and is agone.
Alas! Death, what aileth thee
That thou should'st not have taken me,
When that thou took'st my lady sweet?
That was so fair, so fresh, so free,
So goodë, that men may well see
Of all goodnéss she had no meet."

Seeing the knight overcome by his grief, and on the point of fainting the poet accosts him, and courteously demands his pardon for th intrusion. Thereupon the disconsolate mourner, touched by this token of sympathy, breaks out into the tale of his sorrow which forms the real subject of the poem. It is a lament for the loss of a wife who was hard to gain (the historical basis of this is unknown, but great heiresses are usually hard to gain for cadets even of royal houses), and whom, alas! her husband was to lose so soon after he had gained her. Nothing could be simpler, and nothing could be more delightful, than the Black Knight's description of his lost lady as she was at the time when he wooed and almost despaired of winning her. Many of the touches in this description—and among them some of the very happiest—are, it is true, borrowed from the courtly Machault; but nowhere has Chaucer been happier, both in his appropriations and in the way in which he has really converted them into beauties of his own, than in this, perhaps the most lifelike picture of maidenhood in the whole range of our literature. Or is not the following the portrait of an English girl, all life and all innocence—a type not belonging, like its opposite, to any "period" in particular?

"I saw her dance so comelily,
Carol and sing so sweetëly,
And laugh, and play so womanly,
And lookë so debónairly.
So goodly speak and so friendly,
That, certes, I trow that nevermore
Was seen so blissful a treasúre.
For every hair upon her head,
Sooth to say, it was not red,
Nor yellow neither, nor brown it was,
Methought most likë gold it was.
And ah! what eyes my lady had,
Debónair, goodë, glad and sad,
Simple, of good size, not too wide.
Thereto her look was not aside,
Nor overthwart;"

but so well set that whoever beheld her was drawn and taken up by it, every part of him. Her eyes seemed every now and then as if she were inclined to be merciful, such was the delusion of fools: a delusion in very truth, for

"It was no counterfeited thing;
It was her ownë pure lookíng;
So the goddess, dame Natúre,
Had made them open by measúre
And close; for were she never so glad,
Not foolishly her looks were spread,
Nor wildëly, though that she play'd;
But ever, methought, her eyen said,
'By God, my wrath is all forgiven.'"

And at the same time she liked to live so happily that dulness was afraid of her; she was neither too "sober" nor too glad; in short, no creature had ever more measure in all things. Such was the lady whom the knight had won for himself, and whose virtues he cannot weary of rehearsing to himself or to a sympathizing auditor.

"'Sir!' quoth I, 'where is she now?'
'Now?' quoth he, and stopped anon;
Therewith he waxed as dead as stone,
And said: 'Alas that I was bore!
That was the loss! and heretofore
I told to thee what I had lost.
Bethink thee what I said. Thou know'st
In sooth full little what thou meanest:
I have lost morë than thou weenest.
God wot, alas! right that was she.'
'Alas, sir, how? what may that be?'
'She is dead.' 'Nay?' 'Yes, by my truth!'
'Is that your loss? by God, it is ruth.'"

And with that word, the hunt breaking up, the knight and the poet depart to a "long castle with white walls on a rich hill" (Richmond ?), where a bell tolls and awakens the poet from his slumbers, to let him find himself lying in his bed, and the book, with its legend of love and sleep, resting in his hand. One hardly knows at whom more to wonder—whether at the distinguished French scholar who sees so many trees that he cannot see a forest, and who, not content with declaring the *Book of the Duchess*, as a whole as well as in its details, a servile imitation of Machault, pronounces it at the same time one of Chaucer's feeblest productions; or at the equally eminent English scholar who, with a flippancy which for once ceases to be amusing, opines that Chaucer ought to "have felt ashamed of himself for this most lame and impotent conclusion" of a poem "full of beauties," and ought to have been "caned for it !" Not only was this "lame and impotent conclusion" imitated by Spenser in his lovely elegy *Daphnaïda;** but it is the first passage in Chaucer's writings revealing, one would have thought unmistakably, the dramatic power which was among his most characteristic gifts. The charm of this poem, notwithstanding all the artificialities with which it is overlaid, lies in its simplicity and truth to nature. A real human being is here brought before us instead of a vague abstraction ; and the glow of life is on the page, though it has to tell of death and mourning. Chaucer is finding his strength by dipping into the true spring of poetic inspiration; and in his dreams he is awaking to the real capabilities of his genius. Though he is still uncertain of himself and dependent on others, it seems not too much to say that already in this *Book of the Duchess* he is in some measure an original poet.

How unconscious, at the same time, this waking must have been is manifest from what little is known concerning the course of both his personal and his literary life during the next few years. But there is a tide in the lives of poets, as in those of other men, on the use or neglect of which their future seems largely to depend. For more reasons than one, Chaucer may have been rejoiced to be employed on the two missions abroad, which apparently formed his chief occupation during the years 1370–73. In the first place, the love of books, which he so frequently confesses, must in him have been united to a love of seeing men and cities; few are observers of character without taking pleasure in observing it. Of his literary labors he probably took little thought during these years; although the visit which in the course of them he paid to Italy may be truly said to have constituted the turning-point in his literary life. No work of his can be ascribed to this period with certainty; none of importance has ever been ascribed to it.

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* I have been anticipated in pointing out this fact by the author of the biographical essay on *Spenser* in his series—an essay to which I cannot help taking this opportunity of offering a tribute of sincere admiration. It may not be an undesigned coincidence that the inconsolable widower of the *Daphnaïda* is named Alcyon, while Chaucer's poem begins with a reference to the myth of Ceyx and Alcyone. Sir Arthur Gorges reappears as Alcyon in *Colon Clout's come home again.*

On the latter of these missions Chaucer, who left England in the winter of 1372, visited Genoa and Florence. His object at the former city was to negotiate concerning the settlement of a Genoese mercantile factory in one of our ports, for in this century there already existed between Genoa and England a commercial intercourse, which is illustrated by the obvious etymology of the popular term *jane* occurring in Chaucer in the sense of any small coin.* It has been supposed that on this journey he met at Padua Petrarch, whose residence was near by at Arqua. The statement of the *Clerk* in the *Canterbury Tales* that he learnt the story of patient Griseldis "at Padua of a worthy clerk . . . now dead," who was called "Francis Petrarch, the laureate poet," may, of course, merely imply that Chaucer borrowed the *Clerk's Tale* from Petrarch's Latin version of the original by Boccaccio. But the meeting which the expression suggests may have actually taken place, and may have been accompanied by the most suitable conversation which the imagination can supply; while, on the other hand, it is a conjecture unsupported by any evidence whatever, that a previous meeting between the pair had occurred at Milan in 1368, when Lionel, Duke of Clarence, was married to his second wife with great pomp in the presence of Petrarch and of Froissart. The really noteworthy point is this: that while neither (as a matter of course) the translated *Romaunt of the Rose* nor the *Book of the Duchess* exhibits any traces of Italian influence, the same assertion cannot safely be made with regard to any important poem produced by Chaucer after the date of this Italian journey. The literature of Italy, which was—and in the first instance through Chaucer himself—to exercise so powerful an influence upon the progress of our own, was at last opened to him, though in what measure, and by what gradations, must remain undecided. Before him lay both the tragedies and the comedies, as he would have called them, of the learned and brilliant Boccaccio—both his epic poems and that inexhaustible treasure-house of stories which Petrarch praised for its pious and grave contents, albeit they were mingled with others of undeniable jocoseness—the immortal *Decamerone.* He could examine the refined gold of Petrarch's own verse, with its exquisite variations of its favorite pure theme and its adequate treatment of other elevated subjects; and he might gaze down the long vista of pictured reminiscences, grand and sombre, called up by the mightiest Muse of the Middle Ages, the Muse of Dante. Chaucer's genius, it may be said at once, was not *transformed* by its contact with Italian literature; for a conscious desire as well as a conscientious effort is needed for bringing about such a transformation; and to compare the results of his first Italian journey with those of Goethe's pilgrimage across the Alps, for instance, would be palpably absurd. It might even be doubted whether, for the themes which he was afterwards likely to choose, and actually did choose, for poetic treatment, the materials at his command in French (and English) poetry and prose would not have sufficed him. As it was, it seems probable that he took many things from Italian literature; it is certain that he learnt much from it. There seems every reason to conclude that the influence of Italian study upon Chaucer made him more assiduous, as well as more careful, in the employment of his poetic powers—more hopeful at once, if one may so say, and more assured of himself.

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* "A jane" is in the *Clerk's Tale* said to be a sufficient value at which to estimate the "stormy people."

Meanwhile, soon after his return from his second foreign mission, he was enabled to begin a more settled life at home. He had acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the Crown, as is shown by the grant for life of a daily pitcher of wine, made to him on April 23d, 1374, the merry day of the Feast of St. George. It would, of course, be a mistake to conclude, from any seeming analogies of later times, that this grant, which was received by Chaucer in money-value, and which seems finally to have been commuted for an annual payment of twenty marks, betokened on the part of the King a spirit of patronage appropriate to the claims of literary leisure. How remote such a notion was from the minds of Chaucer's employers is proved by the terms of the patent by which, in the month of June following, he was appointed Comptroller of the Customs and Subsidy of wools, skins, and tanned hides in the port of London. This patent (doubtless according to the usual official form) required him to write the rolls of his office with his own hand, to be continually present there, and to perform his duties in person, and not by deputy. By a warrant of the same month Chaucer was granted the pension of 10*l.* for life already mentioned, for services rendered by him and his wife to the Duke and Duchess of Lancaster and to the Queen; by two successive grants of the year 1375 he received further pecuniary gratifications of a more or less temporary nature; and he continued to receive his pension and allowance for robes as one of the royal esquires. We may, therefore, conceive of him as now established in a comfortable as well as a seemingly secure position. His regular work as comptroller (of which a few scattered documentary vestiges are preserved) scarcely offers more points for the imagination to exercise itself upon than Burns's excisemanship or Wordsworth's collectorship of stamps,* though doubtless it must have brought him into constant contact with merchants and with shipmen, and may have suggested to him many a broad descriptive touch. On the other hand, it is not necessary to be a poet to feel something of that ineffable *ennui* of official life, which even the selfcompensatory practice of arriving late at one's desk, but departing from it early, can only abate, but not take away. The passage has been often quoted in which Chaucer half implies a feeling of the kind, and tells how he sought recreation from what Charles Lamb would have called his "works" at the Custom House in the reading, as we know he did in the writing, of other books :—

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* It is a curious circumstance that Dryden should have received, as a reward for his political services as a satirist, an office almost identical with Chaucer's. But he held it for little more than a year.

> ". . . When thy labour done all is,
> And hast y-madë reckonings,
> Instead of rest and newë things
> Thou go'st home to thine house anon,
> And there as dumb as any stone
> Thou sittest at another book."

The house at home was doubtless that in Aldgate, of which the lease to Chaucer, bearing date May, 1374, has been discovered; and to this we may fancy Chaucer walking morning and evening from the riverside, past the Postern Gate by the Tower. Already, however, in 1376, the routine of his occupations appears to have been interrupted by his engagement on some secret service under Sir John Burley; and in the following year, and in 1378, he was repeatedly abroad in the service of the Crown. On one of his journeys in the last-named year he was attached in a subordinate capacity to the embassy sent to negotiate for the marriage with the French King Charles V.'s daughter Mary to the young King Richard II., who had succeeded to his grandfather in 1377—one of those matrimonial missions which, in the days of both Plantagenets and Tudors, formed so large a part of the functions of European diplomacy, and which not unfrequently, as in this case at least ultimately, came to nothing. A later journey in May of the same year took Chaucer once more to Italy, whither he had been sent with Sir Edward Berkeley to treat with Bernardo Visconti, joint lord of Milan, and "scourge of Lombardy," and Sir John Hawkwood—the former of whom finds a place in that brief mirror of magistrates, the *Monk's Tale*. It was on this occasion that of the two persons whom, according to custom, Chaucer appointed to appear for him in the Courts during his absence, one was John Gower, whose name as that of the second poet of his age is indissolubly linked with Chaucer's own.

So far, the new reign, which had opened amidst doubts and difficulties for the country, had to the faithful servant of the dynasty brought an increase of royal good-will. In 1381—after the suppression of the great rebellion of the villeins—King Richard II. had married the princess whose name for a season linked together the history of two countries the destinies of which had before that age, as they have since, lain far asunder. Yet both Bohemia and England, besides the nations which received from the former the impulses communicated to it by the latter, have reason to remember Queen Anne, the learned and the good; since to her was probably due, in the first instance, the intellectual intercourse between her native and her adopted country. There seems every reason to believe that it was the approach of this marriage which Chaucer celebrated in one of the brightest and most jocund marriage-poems ever composed by a laureate's hand; and if this was so, he cannot but have augmented the favor with which he was regarded at Court. When, therefore, by May, 1382, his foreign journeys had come to an end, we do not wonder to find that, without being called upon to relinquish his former office, he was appointed in addition to the Comptrollership of the Petty Customs in the Port of London, of which post he was allowed to execute the duties by deputy. In November, 1384, he received permission to absent himself from his old comptrollership for a month; and in February, 1385, was allowed to appoint a (permanent) deputy for this office also. During the month of October, 1386, he sat in Parliament at Westminster as one of the Knights of the Shire for Kent, where we may consequently assume him to have possessed landed property. His fortunes, therefore, at this period had clearly risen to their height; and naturally enough his commentators are anxious to assign to these years the sunniest, as well as some of the most elaborate, of his literary productions. It is altogether probable that the amount of leisure now at Chaucer's command enabled him to carry into execution some of the works for which he had gathered materials abroad and at home, and to prepare others. Inasmuch as it contains the passage cited above, referring to Chaucer's official employment, his poem called the *House of Fame* must have been written between 1374 and 1386 (when Chaucer quitted office), and probably is to be dated near the latter year. Inasmuch as both this poem and *Troilus and Cressid* are mentioned in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, they must have been written earlier than it; and the dedication of *Troilus* to Gower and Strode very well agrees with the relations known to have existed about this time between Chaucer and his brother-poet. Very probably all these three works may have been put forth, in more or less rapid succession, during this fortunate season of Chaucer's life.

A fortunate season—for in it the prince who, from whatever cause, was indisputably the patron of Chaucer and his wife, had, notwithstanding his unpopularity among the lower orders, and the deep suspicion fostered by hostile whisperings against him in his royal nephew's breast, still contrived to hold the first place by the throne. Though serious danger had already existed of a conflict between the King and his uncle, yet John of Gaunt and his Duchess Constance had been graciously dismissed with a royal gift of golden crowns, when, in July, 1386, he took his departure for the Continent, to busy himself till his return home in November, 1389, with the affairs of Castile, and with claims arising out of his disbursements there. The reasons for Chaucer's attachment to this particular patron are probably not far to seek; on the precise nature of the relation between them it is useless to speculate. Before Wyclif's death in 1384, John of Gaunt had openly dissociated himself from the reformer; and whatever may have been the case in his later years, it was certainly not as a follower of his old patron that at this date Chaucer could have been considered a Wycliffite.

Again, this period of Chaucer's life may be called fortunate, because during it he seems to have enjoyed the only congenial friendships of which any notice remains to us. The poem of *Troilus and Cressid* is, as was just noted, dedicated to "the moral Gower and the philosophical Strode." Ralph Strode was a Dominican of Jedburgh Abbey, a travelled scholar, whose journeys had carried him as far as the Holy Land, and who was celebrated as a poet in both the Latin and the English tongue, and as a theologian and philosopher. In connection with speculations concerning Chaucer's relations to Wycliffism it is worth noting that Strode, who, after his return to England, was appointed to superintend several new monasteries, was the author of a series of controversial arguments against Wyclif. The tradition, according to which he taught one of Chaucer's sons, is untrustworthy. Of John Gower's life little more is known than of Chaucer's; he appears to have been a Suffolk man, holding manors in that county as well as in Essex, but occasionally to have resided in Kent. At the period of which we are speaking, he may be supposed, besides his French productions, to have already published his Latin *Vox Clamantis*—a poem which, beginning with an allegorical narrative of Wat Tyler's rebellion, passes on to a series of reflections on the causes of the movement, conceived in a spirit of indignation against the corruptions of the Church, but not of sympathy with Wycliffism. This is no doubt the poem which obtained for Gower the epithet "moral" (*i. e.*, sententious) applied to him by Chaucer, and afterwards by Dunbar, Hawes, and Shakspeare. Gower's *Vox Clamantis* and other Latin poems (including one "against the astuteness of the Evil One in the matter of Lollardry") are forgotten; but his English *Confessio Amantis* has retained its right to a place of honour in the history of our literature. The most interesting part of this poem, its *Prologue*, has already been cited as of value for our knowledge of the political and social condition of its times. It gives expression to a conservative tone and temper of mind; and, like many conservative minds, Gower's had adopted, or affected to adopt, the conviction that the world was coming to an end. The cause of the anticipated catastrophe he found in the division, or absence of concord and love, manifest in the condition of things around. The intensity of strife visible among the conflicting elements of which the world, like the individual human being, is composed, too clearly announced the imminent end of all things. Would that a new Arion might arise to make peace where now is hate; but, alas! the prevailing confusion is such that God alone may set it right. But the poem which follows cannot be said to sustain the interest excited by this introduction. Its machinery was obviously suggested by that of the *Roman de la Rose*, though, as

Warton has happily phrased it, Gower, after a fashion of his own, blends Ovid's *Art of Love* with the Breviary. The poet, wandering about in a forest, while suffering under the smart of Cupid's dart, meets Venus, the Goddess of Love, who urges him, as one upon the point of death, to make his full confession to her clerk or priest, the holy father Genius. This confession hereupon takes place by means of question and answer; both penitent and confessor entering at great length into an examination of the various sins and weaknesses of human nature, and of their remedies, and illustrating their observations by narratives, brief or elaborate, from Holy Writ, sacred legend, ancient history, and romantic story. Thus Gower's book, as he says at its close, stands "between earnest and game," and might be fairly described as a *Romaunt of the Rose*, without either the descriptive grace of Guillaume de Lorris, or the wicked wit of Jean de Meung, but full of learning and matter, and written by an author certainly not devoid of the art of telling stories. The mind of this author was thoroughly didactic in its bent; for the beauty of nature he has no real feeling; and though his poem, like so many of Chaucer's, begins in the month of May, he is (unnecessarily) careful to tell us that his object in going forth was not to "sing with the birds." He could not, like Chaucer, transfuse old things into new, but there is enough in his character as a poet to explain the friendship between the pair, of which we hear at the very time when Gower was probably preparing his *Confessio Amantis* for publication.

They are said afterwards to have become enemies; but in the absence of any real evidence to that effect, we cannot believe Chaucer to have been likely to quarrel with one whom he had certainly both trusted and admired. Nor had literary life in England already advanced to a stage of development of which, as in the Elizabethan and Augustan ages, literary jealousy was an indispensable accompaniment. Chaucer is supposed to have attacked Gower in a passage of the *Canterbury Tales*, where he incidentally declares his dislike (in itself extremely commendable) of a particular kind of sensational stories, instancing the subject of one of the numerous tales in the *Confessio Amantis*. There is, however, no reason whatever for supposing Chaucer to have here intended a reflection on his brother poet, more especially as the *Man of Law*, after uttering the censure, relates, though probably not from Gower, a story on a subject of a different kind likewise treated by him. It is scarcely more suspicious that when Gower, in a second edition of his chief work, dedicated in 1393 to Henry, Earl of Derby (afterwards Henry IV.), judiciously omitted the exordium and altered the close of the first edition—both of which were complimentary to Richard II.—he left out, together with its surrounding context, a passage conveying a friendly challenge to Chaucer as a "disciple and poet of the God of Love."

In any case there could have been no political difference between them, for Chaucer was at all times in favor with the House of Lancaster, towards whose future head Gower so early contrived to assume a correct attitude. To him—a man of substance, with landed property in three counties—the rays of immediate court-favor were probably of less importance than to Chaucer; but it is not necessity only which makes courtiers of so many of us: some are born to the vocation, and Gower strikes one as naturally more prudent and cautious—in short, more of a politic personage—than Chaucer. He survived him eight years—a blind invalid, in whose mind at least we may hope nothing dimmed or blurred the recollection of a friend to whom he owes much of his fame.

In a still nearer relationship—on which the works of Chaucer that may certainly or probably be assigned to this period throw some light—it seems impossible to describe him as having been fortunate. Whatever may have been the date and circumstances of his marriage, it seems, at all events in its later years, not to have been a happy one. The allusions to Chaucer's personal experience of married life in both *Troilus and Cressid* and the *House of Fame* are not of a kind to be entirely explicable by that tendency to make a mock of women and of marriage, which has frequently been characteristic of satirists, and which was specially popular in an age cherishing the wit of Jean de Meung, and complacently corroborating its theories from naughty Latin fables, French *fabliaux*, and Italian *novelle*. Both in *Troilus and Cressid* and in the *House of Fame* the poet's tone, when he refers to himself, is generally dolorous; but while both poems contain unmistakable references to the joylessness of his own married life, in the latter he speaks of himself as "suffering debonairly"—or, as we should say, putting a good face upon—a state "desperate of all bliss." And it is a melancholy though half sarcastic glimpse into his domestic privacy which he incidentally, and it must be allowed rather unnecessarily, gives in the following passage of the same poem:—

"'Awake!' to me he said,
In voice and tone the very same
That useth one whom I could name:
And with that voice, sooth to say(n)
My mind returned to me again;
For it was goodly said to me;
So was it never wont to be."

In other words, the kindness of the voice reassured him that it was *not* the same as that which he was wont to hear close to his pillow! Again, the entire tone of the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* is not that of a happy lover; although it would be pleasant enough, considering that the lady who imposes on the poet the penalty of celebrating *good* women is Alcestis, the type of faithful wifehood, to interpret the poem as not only an *amende honorable* to the female sex in general, but a token of reconciliation to the poet's wife in particular. Even in the joyous *Assembly of Fowls*, a marriage-poem, the same discord already makes itself heard; for it cannot be without meaning that in his dream the poet is told by "African"—

> ". . . Thou of love hast lost thy taste, I guess,
> As sick men have of sweet and bitterness;"

and that he confesses for himself that, though he has read much of love, he knows not of it by experience. While, however, we reluctantly accept the conclusion that Chaucer was unhappy as a husband, we must at the same time decline, because the husband was a poet, and one of the most genial of poets, to cast all the blame upon the wife, and to write her down a shrew. It is unfortunate, no doubt, but it is likewise inevitable, that at so great a distance of time the rights and wrongs of a conjugal disagreement or estrangement cannot with safety be adjusted. Yet again, because we refuse to blame Philippa, we are not obliged to blame Chaucer. At the same time, it must not be concealed that his name occurs in the year 1380 in connection with a legal process, of which the most obvious, though not the only possible, explanation is that he had been guilty of a grave infidelity towards his wife. Such discoveries as this last we might be excused for wishing unmade.

Considerable uncertainty remains with regard to the dates of the poems belonging to this seemingly, in all respects but one, fortunate period of Chaucer's life. Of one of these works, however, which has had the curious fate to be dated and re-dated by a succession of happy conjectures, the last and happiest of all may be held to have definitively fixed the occasion. This is the charming poem called the *Assembly of Fowls*, or *Parliament of Birds*—a production which seems so English, so fresh from nature's own inspiration, so instinct with the gayety of Chaucer's own heart, that one is apt to overlook in it the undeniable vestiges of foreign influences, both French and Italian. At its close the poet confesses that he is always reading, and therefore hopes that he may at last read something "so to fare the better." But with all this evidence of study the *Assembly of Fowls* is chiefly interesting as showing how Chaucer had now begun to select as well as to assimilate his loans; how, while he was still moving along well-known tracks, his eyes were joyously glancing to the right and the left; and how the source of most of his imagery, at all events, he already found in the merry England around him, even as he had chosen for his subject one of real national interest.

Anne of Bohemia, daughter of the great Emperor Charles IV., and sister of King Wenceslas, had been successively betrothed to a Bavarian prince and to a Margrave of Meissen, before—after negotiations which, according to Froissart, lasted a year—her hand was given to the young King Richard II. of England. This sufficiently explains the general scope of the *Assembly of Fowls*. an allegorical poem written on or about St. Valentine's Day, 1381—eleven months, or nearly a year, after which date the marriage took place. On the morning sacred to lovers, the poet (in a dream, of course, and this time conducted by the arch-dreamer Scipio in person) enters a garden containing in it the temple of the God of Love, and filled with inhabitants mythological and allegorical. Here he sees the noble goddess Nature, seated upon a hill of flowers, and around her "all the fowls that be," assembled as by time-honored custom on St. Valentine's Day, "when every fowl comes there to choose her mate." Their huge noise and hubbub is reduced to order by Nature, who assigns to each fowl its proper place—the birds of prey highest; then those that eat according to natural inclination—

"Worm or thing of which I tell no tale;"

then those that live by seed; and the various members of the several classes are indicated with amusing vivacity and point, from the royal eagle "that with his sharp look pierceth the sun," and "other eagles of a lower kind" downwards. We can only find room for a portion of the company:—

"The sparrow Venus' son; the nightingale
That clepeth forth the freshë leavës new;
The swallow, murd'rer of the beës small,
That honey make of flowers fresh of hue;
The wedded turtle, with his heartë true;
The peacock, with his angels' feathers bright,
The pheasant, scorner of the cock by night.

"The waker goose, the cuckoo, ever unkind;
The popinjay, full of delicacy;
The drake, destroyer of his ownë kind;
The stork, avenger of adultery;
The cormorant, hot and full of gluttony;
The crows and ravens with their voice of care;
And the throstle old, and the frosty fieldfáre."

Naturalists must be left to explain some of these epithets and designations, not all of which rest on allusions as easily understood as that recalling the goose's exploit on the Capitol; but the vivacity of the whole description speaks for itself. One is reminded of Aristophanes' feathered chorus; but birds are naturally the delight of poets, and were befriended by Dante himself.

Hereupon the action of the poem opens. A female eagle is wooed by three suitors—all eagles; but among them the first, or royal eagle, discourses in the manner most likely to conciliate favor. Before the answer is given, a pause furnishes an opportunity to the other fowls for delighting in the sound of their own voices, Dame Nature proposing that each class of birds shall, through the beak of its representative "agitator," express its opinion on the problem before the assembly. There is much humor in the readiness of the goose to rush in with a ready-made resolution, and in the smart reproof administered by the sparrow-hawk amidst the uproar of "the gentle fowls all." At last Nature silences the tumult, and the lady-eagle delivers her answer, to the effect that she cannot make up her mind for a year to come; but inasmuch as Nature has advised her to choose the royal eagle, his is clearly the most favorable prospect. Whereupon, after certain fowls had sung a roundel, "as was always the usance," the assembly, like some human Parliaments, breaks up with shouting;* and the dreamer awakes to resume his reading.

Very possibly the *Assembly of Fowls* was at no great interval of time either followed or preceded by two poems of far inferior interest —the *Complaint of Mars* (apparently afterwards amalgamated with that of *Venus*), which is supposed to be sung by a bird on St. Valentine's morning, and the fragment *Of Queen Anelida and false Arcite.* There are, however, reasons which make a less early date probable in the case of the latter production, the history of the origin and purpose of which can hardly be said as yet to be removed out of the region of mere speculation. In any case, neither of these poems can be looked upon as preparations, on Chaucer's part, for the longer work on which he was to expend so much labor; but in a sense this description would apply to the translation which, probably before he wrote *Troilus and Cressid*, certainly before he wrote the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, he made of the famous Latin work of Boëthius, "the just man in prison," on the *Consolation of Philosophy*. This book was, and very justly so, one of the favorite manuals of the Middle Ages, and a treasure-house of religious wisdom to centuries of English writers. "Boice of Consolacioun" is cited in the *Romaunt of the Rose*; and the list of passages imitated by Chaucer from the martyr of Catholic orthodoxy and Roman freedom of speech is exceedingly long. Among them are the ever-recurring diatribe against the fickleness of fortune, and (through the medium of Dante) the reflection on the distinction between gentle birth and a gentle life. Chaucer's translation was not made at second-hand; if not always easy, it is conscientious, and interpolated with numerous glosses and explanations thought necessary by the translator. The metre of *The Former Life* he at one time or another turned into verse of his own.

Perhaps the most interesting of the quotations made in Chaucer' poems from Boëthius occurs in his *Troilus and Cressid*, one of the many mediæval versions of an episode engrafted by the lively fancy of an Anglo-Norman *trouvère* upon the deathless, and in its literary variations incomparably luxuriant, growth of the story of Troy. On Benoit de Sainte-Maure's poem Guido de Colonna founded his Latin-prose romance; and this again, after being reproduced in languages and by writers almost innumerable, served Boccaccio as the foundation of his poem *Filostrato*—*i. e.*, the victim of love. All these works, together with Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressid*, with Lydgate's *Troy-Book*, with Henryson's *Testament of Cressid* (and in a sense even with Shakspeare's drama on the theme of Chaucer's poem), may be said to belong to the second cycle of modern versions of the tale of Troy divine. Already their earlier predecessors had gone far astray from Homer, of whom they only knew by hearsay, relying for their facts on late Latin epitomes, which freely mutilated and perverted the Homeric narrative in favor of the Trojans—the supposed ancestors of half the nations of Europe. Accordingly, Chaucer, in a well-known passage in his *House of Fame*, regrets, with sublime coolness, how "one said that Homer" wrote "lies,"

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* "Than all the birdis song with sic a schout
That I annone awoik quhair that I lay."
DUNBAR, *The Thrissill and the Rois.*

> "Feigning in his poetries
> And was to Greekës favouráble.
> Therefore held he it but fable."

But the courtly poets of the romantic age of literature went a step further, and added a mediæval coloring all their own. One converts the Sibyl into a nun, and makes her admonish Æneas to tell his beads. Another—it is Chaucer's successor Lydgate—introduces Priam's sons exercising their bodies in tournaments and their minds in the glorious play of chess, and causes the memory of Hector to be consecrated by the foundation of a chantry of priests who are to pray for the repose of his soul. A third finally condemns the erring Cressid to be stricken with leprosy, and to wander about with cup and clapper, like the unhappy lepers in the great cities of the Middle Ages. Everything, in short, is transfused by the spirit of the adapters' own times; and so far are these writers from any weakly sense of anachronism in describing Troy as if it were a moated and turreted city of the later Middle Ages, that they are only careful now and then to protest their own truthfulness when anything in their narrative seems *unlike* the days in which they write.

But Chaucer, though his poem is, to start with, only an English reproduction of an Italian version of a Latin translation of a French poem, and though in most respects it shares the characteristic features of the body of poetic fiction to which it belongs, is far from being a mere translator. Apart from several remarkable reminiscences introduced by Chaucer from Dante, as well as from the irrepressible *Romaunt of the Rose*, he has changed his original in points which are not mere matters of detail or questions of convenience. In accordance with the essentially dramatic bent of his own genius, some of these changes have reference to the aspect of the characters and the conduct of the plot, as well as to the whole spirit of the conception of the poem. Cressid (who, by the way, is a widow at the outset—whether she had children or not Chaucer nowhere found stated, and therefore leaves undecided) may at first sight strike the reader as a less consistent character in Chaucer than in Boccaccio. But there is true art in the way in which, in the English poem, our sympathy is first aroused for the heroine, whom, in the end, we cannot but condemn. In Boccaccio, Cressid is fair and false—one of those fickle creatures with whom Italian literature, and Boccaccio in particular, so largely deal, and whose presentment merely repeats to us the old cynical half-truth as to woman's weakness. The English poet, though he does not pretend that his heroine was "religious" (*i. e.*, a nun to whom earthly love is a sin), endears her to us from the first; so much that "O the pity of it" seems the hardest verdict we can ultimately pass upon her conduct How, then, is the catastrophe of the action, the falling away of Cressid from her truth to Troilus, poetically explained? By an appeal—pedantically put, perhaps, and as it were dragged in violently by means of a truncated quotation from Boëthius—to the fundamental difficulty concerning the relations between poor human life and the government of the world. This, it must be conceded, is a considerably deeper problem than the nature of woman. Troilus and Cressid, the hero sinned against and the sinning heroine, are the *victims of Fate.* Who shall cast a stone against those who are, but like the rest of us, predestined to their deeds and to their doom; since the co-existence of free-will with predestination does not admit of proof? This solution of the conflict may be morally as well as theologically unsound; it certainly is æsthetically faulty; but it is the reverse of frivolous or commonplace.

Or let us turn from Cressid, "matchless in beauty," and warm with sweet life, but not ignoble even in the season of her weakness, to another personage of the poem. In itself the character of Pandarus is one of the most revolting which imagination can devise; so much so that the name has become proverbial for the most despicable of human types. With Boccaccio Pandarus is Cressid's cousin and Troilus' youthful friend, and there is no intention of making him more offensive than are half the confidants of amorous heroes. But Chaucer sees his dramatic opportunity; and without painting black in black and creating a monster of vice, he invents a good-natured and loquacious elderly go-between, full of proverbial philosophy and invaluable experience—a genuine light comedy character for all times. How admirably this Pandarua practises as well as preaches his art; using the hospitable Deiphobus and the queenly Helen as unconscious instruments in his intrigue for bringing the lovers together:—

> "She came to dinner in her plain intent;
> But God and Pandar wist what all this meant."

Lastly, considering the extreme length of Chaucer's poem, and the very simple plot of the story which it tells, one cannot fail to admire the skill with which the conduct of its action is managed. In Boccaccio the earlier part of the story is treated with brevity, while the conclusion, after the catastrophe has occurred and the main interest has passed, is long drawn out. Chaucer dwells at great length upon the earlier and pleasing portion of the tale, more especially on the falling in love of Cressid, which is worked out with admirable naturalness. But he comparatively hastens over its pitiable end—the fifth and last book of his poem corresponding to not less than four cantos of the *Filostrato*. In Chaucer's hands, therefore, the story is a real love-story; and the more that we are led to rejoice with the lovers in their bliss, the more our compassion is excited by the lamentable end of so much happiness; and we feel at one with the poet, who, after lingering over the happiness of which he has in the end to narrate the fall, as it were, unwillingly proceeds to accomplish his task, and bids his readers be wroth with the destiny of his heroine rather than with himself. His own heart, he says, bleeds and his pen quakes to write what must be written of the falsehood of Cressid, which was her doom.

Chaucer's nature, however tried, was unmistakably one gifted with the blessed power of easy self-recovery. Though it was in a melancholy vein that he had begun to write *Troilus and Cressid*, he had found opportunities enough in the course of the poem for giving expression to the fresh vivacity and playful humor which are justly reckoned among his chief characteristics. And thus, towards its close, we are not surprised to find him apparently looking forward to a sustained effort of a kind more congenial to himself. He sends forth his "little book, his little tragedy," with the prayer that, before he dies, God, his Maker, may send him might to "make some comedy." If the poem called the *House of Fame* followed upon *Troilus and Cressid* (the order of succession may, however, have been the reverse), then, although the poet's own mood had little altered, yet he had resolved upon saying a direction which he rightly felt to be suitable to his genius.

The *House of Fame* has not been distinctly traced to any one foreign source; but the influence of both Petrarch and Dante, as well as that of classical authors, are clearly to be traced in the poem. And yet this work, Chaucer's most ambitious attempt in poetical allegory, may be described not only as in the main due to an original conception, but as representing the results of the writer's personal experience. All things considered, it is the production of a man of wonderful reading, and shows that Chaucer's was a mind interested in the widest variety of subjects, which drew no invidious distinctions, such as we moderns are prone to insist upon, between Arts and Science, but (notwithstanding an occasional deprecatory modesty) eagerly sought to familiarize itself with the achievements of both. In a passage concerning the men of letters who had found a place in the *House of Fame*, he displays not only an acquaintance with the names of several ancient classics, but also a keen appreciation—now and then, perhaps, due to instinct—of their several characteristics. Elsewhere he shows his interest in scientific inquiry by references to such matters as the theory of sound and the Arabic system of numeration; while the Mentor of the poem, the Eagle, openly boasts his powers of clear scientific demonstration, in averring that he can speak "lewdly" (*i. e.*, popularly) "to a lewd man." The poem opens with a very fresh and lively discussion of the question of dreams in general—a semi-scientific subject which much occupied Chaucer, and upon which even Pandarus and the wedded couple of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* expend their philosophy.

Thus, besides giving evidence of considerable information and study, the *House of Fame* shows Chaucer to have been gifted with much natural humor. Among its happy touches are the various rewards bestowed by Fame upon the claimants for her favor, including the ready grant of evil fame to those who desire it (a bad name, to speak colloquially, is to be had for the asking), and the wonderful paucity of those who wish their good works to remain in obscurity and to be their own reward, but then Chaucer was writing in the Middle Ages. And as, pointing in a direction in which the author of the poem was subsequently to follow out, we may also specially notice the company thronging the House of Rumor; shipmen and pilgrims, the two most numerous kinds of travellers in Chaucer's age, fresh from seaport and sepulchre, with scrips brimful of unauthenticated intelligence. In short, this poem offers in its details much that is characteristic of its author's genius; while, as a whole, its abrupt termination notwithstanding, it leaves the impression of completeness. The allegory, simple and clear in construction, fulfils the purpose for which it was devised; the conceptions upon which it is based are neither idle, like many of those in Chaucer's previous allegories, nor are they so artificial and far-fetched as to fatigue instead of stimulating the mind. Pope, who reproduced parts of the *House of Fame* in a loose paraphrase, in attempting to improve the construction of Chaucer's work, only mutilated it. As it stands, it is clear and digestible; and how many allegories, one may take leave to ask, in our own allegory-loving literature or in any other, merit the same commendation? For the rest, Pope's own immortal *Dunciad*, though doubtless more immediately suggested by a personal satire of Dryden's, is in one sense a kind of travesty of the *House of Fame*—a *House of Infamy*.

In the theme of this poem there was undoubtedly something that could hardly fail to humor the half-melancholy mood in which it was manifestly written. Are not, the poet could not but ask himself, all things vanity—"as men say, what may ever last?" Yet the subject brought its consolation likewise. Patient labor, such as this poem attests, is the surest road to that enduring fame, which is "conserved with the shade;" and awaking from his vision, Chaucer takes leave of the reader with a resolution already habitual to him—to read more and more, instead of resting satisfied with the knowledge he has already acquired. And in the last of the longer poems which seem assignable to this period of his life, he proves that one Latin poet at least—Venus' clerk, whom in the *House of Fame* he beheld standing on a pillar of her own Cyprian metal—had been read as well as celebrated by him.

Of this poem, the fragmentary *Legend of Good Women*, the *Prologue* possesses a peculiar biographical as well as literary interest. In his personal feelings on the subject of love and marriage, Chaucer had, when he wrote this *Prologue*, evidently almost passed even beyond the sarcastic stage. And as a poet he was now clearly conscious of being no longer a beginner, no longer a learner only, but one whom his age knew, and in whom it took a critical interest. The list including most of his undoubted works, which he here recites, shows of itself that those already spoken of in the foregoing pages were by this time known to the world, together with two of the *Canterbury Tales*, which had either been put forth independently, or (as seems much less probable) had formed the first instalment of his great work. A further proof of the relatively late date of this *Prologue* occurs in the contingent offer which it makes of the poem to "the Queen," who can be no other than Richard II.'s young consort Anne. At the very outset we find Chaucer, as it were, reviewing his own literary position—and doing so in the spirit of an author who knows very well what is said against him, who knows very well what there is in what is said against him, and who yet is full of that true self-consciousness which holds to its course—not recklessly and ruthlessly, not with a contempt for the feelings and judgments of his fellow-creatures, but with a serene trust in the justification ensured to every honest endeavor. The principal theme of his poems had hitherto been the passion of love, and woman, who is the object of the love of man. Had he not, the superfine critics of his day may have asked—steeped as they were in the artificiality and florid extravagance of chivalry in the days of its decline, and habituated to mistranslating earthly passion into the phraseology of religious devotion—had he not debased the passion of love, and defamed its object? Had he not begun by translating the wicked satire of Jean de Meung, "a heresy against the law" of Love? and had he not, by cynically painting in his Cressid a picture of woman's perfidy, encouraged men to be less faithful to women

"That be as true as ever was any steel?"

In Chaucer's way of meeting this charge, which he emphasizes by putting it in the mouth of the God of Love himself, it is, to be sure, difficult to recognize any very deeply penitent spirit. He mildly wards off the reproach, sheltering himself behind his defender, the "lady in green," who afterwards proves to be herself that type of womanly and wifely fidelity unto death, the true and brave Alcestis. And even in the body of the poem one is struck by a certain perfunctoriness, not to say flippancy, in the way in which its moral is reproduced. The wrathful invective against the various classical followers of Lamech, the maker of tents,* wears no aspect of deep moral indignation; and it is not precisely the voice of a repentant sinner which concludes the pathetic story of the betrayal of Phillis with the adjuration to ladies in general:—

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* Lamech, Chaucer tells us in *Queen Annelida and the false Arcite*, was the

"First father that began
The love of two, and was in bigamy."

"Beware ye women of your subtle foe,
Since yet this day men may example see;
And as in love trust ye no man but me."

At the same time the poet lends an attentive ear, as genius can always afford to do, to a criticism of his shortcomings, and readily accepts the sentence pronounced by Alcestis, that he shall write a legend of *good* women, both maidens and also wives, that were

"True in loving all their lives."

And thus, with the courage of a good or, at all events, easy conscience, he sets about his task which unfortunately—it is conjectured by reason of domestic calamities, probably including the death of his wife—remained, or at least has come down to us unfinished. We have only nine of the nineteen stories which he appears to have intended to present (though, indeed, a manuscript of Henry IV.'s reign quotes Chaucer's book of "xxv good women"). It is by no means necessary to suppose that all these nine stories were written continuously; maybe, too, Chaucer, with all his virtuous intentions, grew tired of his rather monotonous scheme at a time when he was beginning to busy himself with stories meant to be fitted into the more liberal framework of the *Canterbury Tales.* All these illustrations of female constancy are of classical origin, as Chaucer is glad to make known; and most of them are taken from Ovid. But though the thread of the English poet's narratives is supplied by such established favorites as the stories of Cleopatra, the Martyr Queen of Egypt; of Thisbe of Babylon, the Martyr; and of Dido, to whom "Æneas was forsworn," yet he by no means slavishly adheres to his authorities, but alters or omits in accordance with the design of his book. Thus, for instance, we read of Medea's desertion by Jason, but hear nothing of her as the murderess of her children; while, on the other hand, the tragedy of Dido is enhanced by pathetic additions not to be found in Virgil. Modern taste may dislike the way in which this poem mixes up the terms and ideas of Christian martyrology with classical myths,

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This poem seems designed to illustrate much the same moral as that enforced by the *Legend of Good Women*—a moral which, by-the-bye, is already foreshadowed towards the close of *Troilus and Cressid*, where Chaucer speaks of

"Women that betrayèd be
Through falsë folk (God give them sorrow, amen!),
That with their greatë wit and subtlety
Betray you; and 'tis this that moveth me
To speak; and, in effect, you all I pray:
Beware of men, and hearken what I say."

and as "the Legend of the Saints of Cupid" assumes the character of a kind of calendar of women canonized by reason of their faithfulness to earthly love. But obviously this is a method of treatment belonging to an age, not to a single poem or poet. Chaucer's artistic judgment in the selection and arrangement of his themes, the wonderful vivacity and true pathos with which he turns upon Tarquin or Jason as if they had personally offended him, and his genuine flow of feeling not only *for* but *with* his unhappy heroines, add a new charm to the old familiar faces. Proof is thus furnished, if any proof were needed, that no story interesting in itself is too old to admit of being told again by a poet; in Chaucer's version Ovid loses something in polish, but nothing in pathos; and the breezy freshness of nature seems to be blowing through tales which became the delight of a nation's, as they have been that of many a man's, youth.

A single passage must suffice to illustrate the style of the *Legend of Good Women*; and it shall be the lament of Ariadne, the concluding passage of the story which is the typical tale of desertion, though not, as it remains in Chaucer, of desertion unconsoled. It will be seen how far the English poet's vivacity is from being extinguished by the pathos of the situation described by him.

"Right in the dawëning awaketh she,
And gropeth in the bed, and found right nought.
  'Alas,' quoth she, 'that ever I was wrought!
I am betrayèd!' and her hair she rent,
And to the strandë barefoot fast she went,
And criedë: 'Theseus, mine heartë sweet!
Where be ye, that I may not with you meet?
And mightë thus by beastës been y-slain!'
The hollow rockës answered her again.
No man she sawë; and yet shone the moon,
And high upon a rock she wentë soon,
And saw his bargë sailing in the sea.
Cold waxed her heart, and right thus saidë she:
  'Meeker than ye I find the beastës wild!'
(Hath he not sin that he her thus beguiled?)
She cried, 'O turn again for ruth and sin,
Thy bargë hath not all thy meinie in.'
Her kerchief on a polë stickèd she,
Askancë, that he should it well y-see,
And should remember that she was behind,
And turn again, and on the strand her find.
But all for naught; his way he is y-gone,
And down she fell aswoonë on a stone;
And up she rose, and kissed, in all her care,
The steppës of his feet remaining there;
And then unto her bed she speaketh so:
  'Thou bed,' quoth she, 'that hast receivèd two,
Thou shalt answér for two, and not for one;
Where is the greater part away y-gone?
Alas, what shall I wretched wight become?
For though so be no help shall hither come,
Home to my country dare I not for dread,
I can myselfë in this case not rede.'
Why should I tell more of her cómplaining?

It is so long it were a heavy thing.
In her Epistle Naso telleth all.
But shortly to the endë tell I shall.
The goddës have her holpen for pity,
And in the sign of Taurus men may see
The stonës of her crown all shining clear.
I will no further speak of this mattér.
But thus these falsë lovers can beguile
Their truë love; the devil quite him his while!"

Manifestly, then, in this period of his life—if a chronology which is in a great measure conjectural may be accepted—Chaucer had been a busy worker, and his pen had covered many a page with the results of his rapid productivity. Perhaps his *Words unto his own Scrivener*, which we may fairly date about this time, were rather too hard on "Adam." Authors *are* often hard on persons who have to read their handiwork professionally; but, in the interest of posterity, poets may be permitted an execration or two against whosoever changes their words as well as against whosoever moves their bones:—

" Adam Scrivener, if ever it thee befall
Boece or *Troilus* to write anew,
Under thy long locks may'st thou have the scall,
If thou my writing copy not more true!
So oft a day I must thy work renew,
It to correct and eke to rub and scrape;
And all is through thy negligence and rape."

How far the manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* had already progressed is uncertain; the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women* mentions the *Love of Palamon and Arcite*—an earlier version of the *Knight's Tale*, if not identical with it—and a *Life of Saint Cecilia* which is preserved, apparently without alteration, in the *Second Nun's Tale*. Possibly other stories had been already added to these, and the *Prologue* written—but this is more than can be asserted with safety. Who shall say whether, if the stream of prosperity had continued to flow, on which the bark of Chaucer's fortunes had for some years been borne along, he might not have found leisure and impulse sufficient for completing his masterpiece, or, at all events, for advancing it near to completion? That his powers declined with his years, is a conjecture which it would be difficult to support by satisfactory evidence; though it seems natural enough to assume that he wrote the best of his *Canterbury Tales* in his best days. Troubled times we know to have been in store for him. The reverse in his fortunes may perhaps fail to call forth in us the sympathy which we feel for Milton in his old age doing battle against a Philistine reaction, or for Spenser, overwhelmed with calamities at the end of a life full of bitter disappointment. But at least we may look upon it with the respectful pity which we entertain for Ben Jonson groaning in the midst of his literary honors under that *dura rerum necessitas*, which is rarely more a matter of indifference to poets than it is to other men.

In 1386, as already noted, Chaucer, while continuing to hold both his offices at the Customs, had taken his seat in Parliament as one of the knights of the shire of Kent. He had attained to this honor during the absence in Spain of his patron, the Duke of Lancaster, though probably he had been elected in the interest of that prince. But John of Gaunt's influence was inevitably reduced to nothing during his absence, and no doubt King Richard now hoped to be a free agent. But he very speedily found that the hand of his younger uncle, Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, was heavier upon him than that of the elder. The Parliament of which Chaucer was a member was the assembly which boldly confronted the autocratical tendencies of Richard II., and after overthrowing the Chancellor, Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, forced upon the King a Council controlling the administration of affairs. Concerning the acts of this Council, of which Gloucester was the leading member, little or nothing is known, except that in financial matters it attempted, after the manner of new brooms, to sweep clean. Soon the attention of Gloucester and his following was occupied by subjects more absorbing than a branch of reform fated to be treated fitfully. In this instance the new administration had as usual demanded its victims —and among their number was Chaucer; for it can hardly be a mere coincidence that by the beginning of December in this year, 1386, Chaucer had lost one, and by the middle of the same month the other, of his comptrollerships. At the same time, it would be presumptuously unfair to conclude that misconduct of any kind on his part had been the reason of his removal. The explanation usually given is that he fell as an adherent of John of Gaunt: perhaps a safer way of putting the matter would be to say that John of Gaunt was no longer in England to protect him. Inasmuch as even reforming Governments are occasionally as anxious about men as they are about measures, Chaucer's posts may have been wanted for nominees of the Duke of Gloucester and his Council—such as it is probably no injustice to Masters Adam Yerdely and Henry Gisors (who respectively succeeded Chaucer in his two offices) to suppose them to have been. Moreover, it is just possible that Chaucer was the reverse of a *persona grata* to Gloucester's faction on account of the Comptroller's previous official connection with Sir Nicholas Brembre, who, besides being hated in the city, had been accused of seeking to compass the deaths of the Duke and of some of his adherents. In any case, it is noticeable that four months *before* the return to England of the Duke of Lancaster—*i. e.*, in July, 1389—Chaucer was appointed Clerk of the King's Works at Westminster, the Tower, and a large number of other royal manors or tenements, including (from 1390, at all events) St. George's Chapel, Windsor. In this office he was not ill-paid, receiving two shillings a day in money, and very possibly perquisites in addition, besides being allowed to appoint a deputy. Inasmuch as, in the summer of the year 1389, King Richard had assumed the reins of government in person, while the ascendency of Gloucester was drawing to a close, we may conclude the

King to have been personally desirous to provide for a faithful and attached servant of his house, for whom he had had reason to feel a personal liking. It would be specially pleasing, were we able to connect with Chaucer's restoration to official employment the high-minded Queen Anne, whose impending betrothal he had probably celebrated in one poem, and whose patronage he had claimed for another.

The Clerkship of the King's Works, to which Chaucer was appointed, seems to have been but a temporary office; or at all events he only held it for rather less than two years, during part of which he performed its duties by deputy. Already, however, before his appointment to this post, he had certainly become involved in difficulties; for in May, 1388, we find his pensions, at his own request, assigned to another person (John Scalby)—a statement implying that he had raised money on them which he could only pay by making over the pensions themselves. Very possibly, too, he had, before his dismissal from his comptrollerships, been subjected to an enquiry which, if it did not touch his honor, at all events gave rise to very natural apprehensions on the part of himself and his friends. There is, accordingly, much probability in the conjecture which ascribes to this season of peril and pressure the composition of the following justly famous stanzas, entitled *Good Counsel of Chaucer* :—

"Flee from the press, and dwell with soothfastness;
Sufficë thee thy good, though it be small;
For hoard hath hate, and climbing tickleness:
Press hath envy, and wealth is blinded all.
Savour no more than thee behovë shall;
Do well thyself that other folk canst rede;
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no dread.

"Painë thee not each crooked to redress
In trust of her* that turneth as a ball.
Greatë rest stands in little business.
Beware also to spurn against a nail.
Strive not as doth a pitcher with a wall.
Deemë thyself that deemest others' deed;
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no dread.

"That thee is sent receive in buxomness;
The wrestling of this world asketh a fall.
Here is no home, here is but wilderness.
Forth, pilgrimë! forth, beast, out of thy stall!
Look up on high, and thankë God of all.
Waivë thy lust, and let thy ghost thee lead,
And truth shall thee deliver, it is no dread."

Misfortunes, it is said, never come alone; and whatever view may be taken as to the nature of the relations between Chaucer and his wife, her death cannot have left him untouched. From the absence of any record as to the payment of her pension after June, 1387, this event is presumed to have taken place in the latter half of that year. More than this cannot safely be conjectured ; but it remains *possible* that the *Legend of Good Women* and its *Prologue* formed a peace-offering to one whom Chaucer may have loved again after he had lost her, though without thinking of her as of his "late departed saint." Philippa Chaucer had left behind her a son of the name of Lewis ; and it is pleasing to find the widower in the year 1391 (the year in which he lost his Clerkship of the Works) attending to the boy's education, and supplying him with the intellectual "bread and milk" suitable for his tender age in the shape of a popular treatise on a subject which has at all times excited the intelligent curiosity of the young. The treatise *On the Astrolabe*, after describing the instrument itself, and showing how to work it, proceeded, or was intended to proceed, to fulfil the purposes of a general astronomical manual ; but, like other and more important works of its author, it has come down to us in an uncompleted, or at all events incomplete, condition. What there is of it was, as a matter of course, not original—popular scientific books rarely are. The little treatise, however, possesses a double interest for the student of Chaucer. In the first place, it shows explicitly, what several passages imply, that while he was to a certain extent fond of astronomical study (as to his capacity for which he clearly does injustice to himself in the *House of Fame*), his good sense and his piety alike revolted against extravagant astrological speculations. He certainly does not wish to go as far as the honest carpenter in the *Miller's Tale*, who glories in his incredulity of aught besides his *credo*, and who yet is afterwards befooled by the very impostor of whose astrological pursuits he had reprehended the impiety. "Men," he says, "should know nothing of that which is private to God. Yea, blessed be alway a simple man who knows nothing but only his belief." In his little work *On the Astrolabe* Chaucer speaks with calm reasonableness of superstitions in which his spirit has no faith, and pleads guilty to ignorance of the useless knowledge with which they are surrounded. But the other, and perhaps the chief value, to us of this treatise lies in the fact that of Chaucer in an intimate personal relation it contains the only picture in which it is impossible to suspect any false or exaggerated coloring. For here we have him writing to his "little Lewis" with fatherly satisfaction in the ability displayed by the boy "to learn sciences touching numbers and proportions," and telling how, after making a present to the child of "a sufficient astrolabe as for our own horizon, composed after the latitude of Oxford," he has further resolved to explain to him a certain number of conclusions connected with the purposes of the instrument. This he has made up his mind to do in a forcible as well as simple way ; for he has shrewdly divined a secret, now and then overlooked by those who condense sciences for babes, that children need to be taught a few things not only clearly but fully—repetition being in more senses than one "the mother of studies :"—

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* Fortune.

> "Now will I pray meekly every discreet person that readeth or heareth this little treatise, to hold my rude inditing excused, and my superfluity of words, for two causes. The first cause is: that curious inditing and hard sentences are full heavy at once for such a child to learn. And the second cause is this: that truly it seems better to me to write unto a child twice a good sentence than to forget it once."

Unluckily we know nothing further of Lewis—not even whether, as has been surmised, he died before he had been able to turn to lucrative account his calculating powers, after the fashion of his apocryphal brother Thomas or otherwise.

Though by the latter part of the year 1391 Chaucer had lost his Clerkship of the Works, certain payments (possibly of arrears) seem afterwards to have been made to him in connection with the office. A very disagreeable incident of his tenure of it had been a double robbery from his person of official money, to the very serious extent of twenty pounds. The perpetrators of the crime were a notorious gang of highwaymen, by whom Chaucer was, in September, 1390, apparently on the same day, beset both at Westminster and near to "the foul Oak" at Hatcham, in Surrey. A few months afterwards he was discharged by writ from repayment of the loss to the Crown. His experiences during the three years following are unknown; but in 1394 (when things were fairly quiet in England) he was granted an annual pension of twenty pounds by the King. This pension, of which several subsequent notices occur, seems at times to have been paid tardily or in small instalments, and also to have been frequently anticipated by Chaucer in the shape of loans of small sums. Further evidence of his straits is to be found in his having, in the year 1398, obtained letters of protection against arrest, making him safe for two years. The grant of a tun of wine in October of the same year is the last favor known to have been extended to Chaucer by King Richard II. Probably no English sovereign has been more diversely estimated, both by his contemporaries and by posterity, than this ill-fated prince, in the records of whose career many passages betokening high spirit strangely contrast with the impotence of its close. It will at least be remembered in his favor that he was a patron of the arts; and that after Froissart had been present at his christening, he received, when on the threshold of manhood, the homage of Gower, and on the eve of his downfall showed most seasonable kindness to a poet far greater than either of these. It seems scarcely justifiable to assign to any particular point of time the *Ballade sent to King Richard* by Chaucer; but its manifest intention was to apprise the King of the poet's sympathy with his struggle against the opponents of the royal policy, which was a thoroughly autocratical one. Considering the nature of the relations between the pair, nothing could be more unlikely than that Chaucer should have taken upon himself to exhort his sovereign and patron to steadfastness of political conduct. And in truth, though the loyal tone of this address is (as already observed) unmistakable enough, there is little difficulty in accounting for the mixture of commonplace reflections and of admonitions to the King to persist in a spirited domestic policy. He is to

> "Dread God, do law, love truth and worthiness,"

and wed his people—not himself—"again to steadfastness." However, even a quasi-political poem of this description, whatever element of implied flattery it may contain, offers pleasanter reading than those least attractive of all occasional poems, of which the burden is a cry for money. The *Envoy to Scogan* has been diversely dated and diversely interpreted. The reference in these lines to a deluge of pestilence clearly means, not a pestilence produced by heavy rains, but heavy rains which might be expected to produce a pestilence. The primary purpose of the epistle admits of no doubt, though it is only revealed in the postscript. After bantering his friend on account of his faint-heartedness in love—

> "Because thy lady saw not thy distress,
> Therefore thou gavest her up at Michaelmas—

Chaucer ends by entreating him to further his claims upon the royal munificence. Of this friend, Henry Scogan, a tradition repeated by Ben Jonson averred that he was a fine gentleman and Master of Arts of Henry IV.'s time, who was regarded and rewarded for his Court "disguisings" and "writings in ballad-royal." He is, therefore, appropriately apostrophized by Chaucer as kneeling

> ". . . At the streamës head
> Of grace, of all honoúr and worthiness,"

and reminded that his friend is at the other end of the current. The weariness of tone, natural under the circumstances, obscures whatever humor the poem possesses.

Very possibly the lines to Scogan were written not before, but immediately after, the accession of Henry IV. In that case they belong to about the same date as the well-known and very plain-spoken *Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse*, addressed by him to the new Sovereign without loss of time, if not indeed, as it would be hardly uncharitable to suppose, prepared beforehand. Even in this *Complaint* (the term was a technical one for an elegiac piece, and was so used by Spenser) there is a certain frank geniality of tone, the natural accompaniment of an easy conscience, which goes some way to redeem the nature of the subject. Still, the theme remains one which only an exceptionally skilful treatment can make sufficiently pathetic or perfectly comic. The lines had the desired effect, for within four days after his accession—*i. e.*, on October 3d, 1399—the "conqueror of Brut's Albion," otherwise King Henry IV., doubled Chaucer's pension of twenty marks, so that, continuing as he did to enjoy the annuity of twenty pounds granted him by King Richard, he was now once more in comfortable circumstances. The best proof of these lies in the fact that very speedily—on Christmas Eve, 1399—Chaucer, probably in a rather sanguine mood, covenanted for the lease for fifty-three years of a house in the garden of the chapel of St. Mary at Westminster. And here, in comfort and in peace, as there seems every reason to believe, he died before another year, and with it the century, had quite run out—on October 25th, 1400.

Our fancy may readily picture to itself the last days of Geoffrey Chaucer, and the ray of autumn sunshine which gilded his reverend head before it was bowed in death. His old patron's more fortunate son, whose earlier chivalrous days we are apt to overlook in thinking of him as a politic king and the sagacious founder of a dynasty, cannot have been indifferent to the welfare of a subject for whose needs he had provided with so prompt a liberality. In the vicinity of a throne the smiles of royalty are wont to be contagious—and probably many a courtier thought well to seek the company of one who, so far as we know, had never forfeited the good-will of any patron or the attachment of any friend. We may, too, imagine him visited by associates who loved and honored the poet as well as the man—by Gower, blind, or nearly so, if tradition speak the truth, and who, having "long had sickness upon hand," seems, unlike Chaucer, to have been ministered to in his old age by a housewife whom he had taken to himself in contradiction of principles preached by both the poets; and by "Bukton," converted, perchance, by means of Chaucer's gift to him of the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, to a resolution of perpetual bachelorhood, but otherwise, as Mr. Carlyle would say, "dim to us." Besides these, if he was still among the living, the philosophical Strode in his Dominican habit, on a visit to London from one of his monasteries; or—more probably—the youthful Lydgate, not yet a Benedictine monk, but pausing, on his return from his travels in divers lands, to sit awhile, as it were, at the feet of the master in whose poetic example he took pride; the courtly Scogan; and Occleve, already learned, who was to cherish the memory of Chaucer's outward features as well as of his fruitful intellect: all these may in his closing days have gathered around their friend; and perhaps one or the other may have been present to close the watchful eyes for ever.

But there was yet another company with which, in these last years, and perhaps in these last days of his life, Chaucer had intercourse, of which he can rarely have lost sight, and which even in solitude he must have had constantly with him. This company has since been well known to generations and centuries of Englishmen. Its members head that goodly procession of figures which have been familiar to our fathers as life-long friends, which are the same to us, and will be to our children after us—the procession of the nation's favorites among the characters created by our great dramatists and novelists, the eternal types of human nature which nothing can efface from our imagination. Or is there less reality about the *Knight* in his short cassock and old-fashioned armor and the *Wife of Bath* in hat and wimple, than—for instance—about Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman? Can we not hear *Madame Eglantine* lisping her "Stratford-atte-Bowe" French as if she were a personage in a comedy by Congreve or Sheridan? Is not the *Summoner*, with his "fire-red cherubim's face," a worthy companion for Lieutenant Bardolph himself? And have not the humble *Parson* and his Brother the *Ploughman* that irresistible pathos which Dickens could find in the simple and the poor? All these figures, with those of their fellow-pilgrims, are to us living men and women; and in their midst the poet who created them lives, as he has painted himself among the company, not less faithfully than Occleve depicted him from memory after death.

How long Chaucer had been engaged upon the *Canterbury Tales* it is impossible to decide. No process is more hazardous than that of distributing a poet's works among the several periods of his life according to divisions of species—placing his tragedies or serious stories in one season, his comedies or lighter tales in another, and so forth. Chaucer no more admits of such treatment than Shakspeare; nor, because there happens to be in his case little actual evidence by which to control or contradict it, are we justified in subjecting him to it. All we know is that he left his great work a fragment, and that we have no mention in any of his other poems of more than three of the *Tales*—two, as already noticed, being mentioned in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, written at a time when they had perhaps not yet assumed the form in which they are preserved, while to the third (the *Wife of Bath*) reference is made in the *Envoi to Bukton*, the date of which is quite uncertain. At the same time, the labor which was expended upon the *Canterbury Tales* by their author manifestly obliges us to conclude that their composition occupied several years, with inevitable interruptions, while the gayety and brightness of many of the stories, and the exuberant humor and exquisite pathos of others, as well as the masterly effectiveness of the *Prologue*, make it almost certain that these parts of the work were written when Chaucer was not only capable of doing his best, but also in a situation which admitted of his doing it. The supposition is, therefore, a very probable one, that the main period of their composition may have extended over the last eleven or twelve years of his life, and have begun about the time when he was again placed above want by his appointment to the Clerkship of the Royal Works.

Again, it is virtually certain that the poem of the *Canterbury Tales* was left in an unfinished and partially unconnected condition, and it is altogether uncertain whether Chaucer had finally determined upon maintaining or modifying the scheme originally indicated by him in the *Prologue*. There can, accordingly, be no necessity for working out a scheme into which everything that he has left belonging to the *Canterbury Tales* may most easily and appropriately fit. Yet the labor is by no means lost of such inquiries as those which have, with singular zeal, been prosecuted concerning the several problems that have to be solved before such a scheme can be completed. Without a review of the evidence it would, however, be preposterous to pronounce on the proper answer to be given to the questions : what were the number of tales and that of tellers ultimately designed by Chaucer; what was the order in which he intended the *Tales* actually written by him to stand; and what was the plan of the journey of his pilgrims, as to the localities of its stages and as to the time occupied by it—whether one day for the fifty-six miles from London to Canterbury (which is by no means impossible), or two days (which seems more likely), or four. The route of the pilgrimage must have been one in parts of which it is pleasant even now to dally, when the sweet spring flowers are in bloom which Mr. Boughton has painted for lovers of the poetry of English landscape.

There are one or two other points which should not be overlooked in considering the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole. It has sometimes been assumed as a matter of course that the plan of the work was borrowed from Boccaccio. If this means that Chaucer owed to the *Decamerone* the idea of including a number of stories in the framework of a single narrative, it implies too much. For this notion, a familiar one in the East, had long been known to Western Europe by the numerous versions of the terribly ingenious story of the *Seven Wise Masters* (in the progress of which the unexpected never happens), as well as by similar collections of the same kind. And the special connection of this device with a company of pilgrims might, as has been well remarked, have been suggested to Chaucer by an English book certainly within his ken, the *Vision concerning Piers Plowman*, where, in the "fair field full of folk," are assembled, among others, "pilgrims and palmers who went forth on their way" to St. James of Compostella and to saints at Rome "*with many wise tales*"—("and had leave to lie all their life after"). But even had Chaucer owed the idea of his plan to Boccaccio, he would not thereby have incurred a heavy debt to the Italian novelist. There is nothing really dramatic in the schemes of the *Decamerone*, or of the numerous imitations which it called forth, from the French *Heptaméron* and the Neapolitan *Pentamerone* down to the German *Phantasus*. It is unnecessary to come nearer to our own times; for the author of the *Earthly Paradise* follows Chaucer in endeavoring at least to give a framework of real action to his collection of poetic tales. There is no organic connection between the powerful narrative of the Plague opening Boccaccio's book, and the stories, chiefly of love and its adventures, which follow; all that Boccaccio did was to preface an interesting series of tales by a more interesting chapter of history, and then to bind the tales themselves together lightly and naturally in days, like rows of pearls in a collar. But while in the *Decamerone* the framework, in its relation to the stories, is of little or no significance, in the *Canterbury Tales* it forms one of the most valuable organic elements in the whole work. One test of the distinction is this: what reader of the *Decamerone* connects any of the novels composing it with the personality of the particular narrator, or even cares to remember the grouping of the stories as illustrations of fortunate or unfortunate, adventurous or illicit, passion? The charm of Boccaccio's book, apart from the independent merits of the Introduction, lies in the admirable skill and unflagging vivacity with which the "novels" themselves are told. The scheme of the *Canterbury Tales*, on the other hand, possesses some genuinely dramatic elements. If the entire form, at all events in its extant condition, can scarcely be said to have a plot, it at least has an *exposition* unsurpassed by that of any comedy, ancient or modern; it has the possibility of a growth of action and interest; and, which is of far more importance, it has a variety of characters which mutually both relieve and supplement one another. With how sure an instinct, by the way, Chaucer has anticipated that unwritten law of the modern drama according to which low comedy characters always appear in couples! Thus the *Miller* and the *Reeve* are a noble pair running in parallel lines, though in contrary directions; so are the *Cook* and the *Manciple*, and again and more especially the *Friar* and the *Summoner*. Thus at least the germ of a comedy exists in the plan of the *Canterbury Tales*. No comedy could be formed out of the mere circumstance of a company of ladies and gentlemen sitting down in a country-house to tell an unlimited number of stories on a succession of topics; but a comedy could be written with the purpose of showing how a wide variety of national types will present themselves, when brought into mutual contact by an occasion peculiarly fitted to call forth their individual rather than their common characteristics.

For not only are we at the opening of the *Canterbury Tales* placed in the very heart and centre of English life; but the poet contrives to find for what may be called his action a background, which seems of itself to suggest the most serious emotions and the most humorous associations. And this without anything grotesque in the collocation, such as is involved in the notion of men telling anecdotes at a funeral, or forgetting a pestilence over love-stories. Chaucer's *dramatis personæ* are a company of pilgrims, whom at first we find assembled in a hostelry in Southwark, and whom we afterwards accompany on their journey to Canterbury. The hostelry is that *Tabard* inn which, though it changed its name, and no doubt much of its actual structure, long remained, both in its general appearance, and perhaps in part of its actual self, a genuine relic of mediæval London. There, till within a very few years from the present date, might still be had a draught of that London ale of which Chaucer's *Cook* was so thorough a *connoisseur;* and there within the big courtyard, surrounded by a gallery very probably a copy of its predecessor, was ample room for

> ". . . Well nine and twenty in a company
> Of sundry folk,"

with their horses and travelling gear sufficient for a ride to Canterbury. The goal of this ride has its religious, its national, one might even say its political aspect; but the journey itself has an importance of its own. A journey is generally one of the best of opportunities for bringing out the distinctive points in the characters of travellers; and we are accustomed to say that no two men can long travel in one another's company unless their friendship is equal to the severest of tests. At home men live mostly among colleagues and comrades; on a journey they are placed in continual contrast with men of different pursuits and different habits of life. The shipman away from his ship, the monk away from his cloister, the scholar away from his books, become interesting instead of remaining commonplace, because the contrasts become marked which exist between them. Moreover, men undertake journeys for divers purposes, and a pilgrimage in Chaucer's day united a motley group of chance companions in search of different ends at the same goal. One goes to pray, the other seeks profit; the third distraction, the fourth pleasure. To some the road is everything; to others, its terminus. All this vanity lay in the mere choice of Chaucer's framework; there was, accordingly, something of genius in the thought itself; and even an inferior workmanship could hardly have left a description of a Canterbury pilgrimage unproductive of a wide variety of dramatic effects.

But Chaucer's workmanship was as admirable as his selection of his framework was felicitous. He has executed only part of his scheme, according to which each pilgrim was to tell two tales both going and coming, and the best narrator, the laureate of this merry company, was to be rewarded by a supper at the common expense on their return to their starting-place. Thus the design was, not merely to string together a number of poetical tales by an easy thread, but to give a real unity and completeness to the whole poem. All the tales told by all the pilgrims were to be connected together by links; the reader was to take an interest in the movement and progress of the journey to and fro; and the poem was to have a middle as well as a beginning and an end—the beginning being the inimitable *Prologue* as it now stands; the middle the history of the pilgrims' doings at Canterbury; and the close their return and farewell celebration at the Tabard inn. Though Chaucer carried out only about a fourth part of this plan, yet we can see, as clearly as if the whole poem lay before us in a completed form, that its most salient feature was intended to lie in the variety of its characters.

Each of these characters is distinctly marked out in itself, while at the same time it is designed as the type of a class. This very obvious criticism, of course, most readily admits of being illustrated by the *Prologue*—a gallery of *genre*-portraits which many master-hands have essayed to reproduce with pen or with pencil. Indeed, one lover of Chaucer sought to do so with both—poor gifted Blake, whose descriptive text of his picture of the Canterbury Pilgrims Charles Lamb, with the loving exaggeration in which he was at times fond of indulging, pronounced the finest criticism on Chaucer's poem he had ever read. But it should be likewise noticed that the character of each pilgrim is kept up through the poem, both incidentally in the connecting passages between tale and tale, and in the manner in which the tales themselves are introduced and told. The connecting passages are full of dramatic vivacity; in these the *Host*, Master Harry Bailly, acts as a most efficient *choragus;* but the other pilgrims are not silent, and in the *Manciple's* Prologue the *Cook* enacts a bit of downright farce for the amusement of the company and of stray inhabitants of "Bob-up-and-down." He is, however, homœopathically cured of the effects of his drunkenness, so that the *Host* feels justified in offering up a thanksgiving to Bacchus for his powers of conciliation. The *Man of Law's* Prologue is an argument; the *Wife of Bath's* the ceaseless clatter of an indomitable tongue. The sturdy *Franklin* corrects himself when deviating into circumlocution:—

"Till that the brightë sun had lost his hue,
For th' hórizon had reft the sun of light
(This is as much to say as: it was night)."

The *Miller* "tells his churlish tale in his manner," of which manner the less said the better; while in the *Reeve's Tale*, Chaucer even, after the manner of a comic dramatist, gives his Northern undergraduate a vulgar, ungrammatical phraseology, probably designedly, since the poet was himself a "Southern man." The *Pardoner* is exuberant in his sample-eloquence; the *Doctor of Physic* is gravely and sententiously moral—

". . . A proper man,
And like a prelate, by Saint Runyan,"

says the *Host*. Most sustained of all, though he tells no tale, is, from the nature of the case, the character of Harry Bailly, the host of the Tabard, himself—who, whatever resemblance he may bear to his actual original, is the ancestor of a long line of descendants, including mine Host of the Garter in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. He is a thorough worldling, to whom anything smacking of the precisian in morals is as offensive as anything of a Romantic tone in literature; he smells a Lollard without fail, and turns up his nose at an old-fashioned ballad or a string of tragic instances as out of date or tedious. In short, he speaks his mind and that of other more timid people at the same time, and is one of those sinners whom everybody both likes and respects. "I advise," says the *Pardoner*, with polite impudence (when inviting the company to become purchasers of the holy wares which he has for sale), that

". . . Our host, he shall begin,
For he is most envelopèd in sin."

He is thus both an admirable picture in himself and an admirable foil to those characters which are most unlike him—above all, to the *Parson* and the *Clerk of Oxford*, the representatives of religion and learning.

As to the *Tales* themselves, Chaucer beyond a doubt meant their style and tone to be above all things *popular*. This is one of the causes accounting for the favor shown to the work—a favor attested, so far as earlier times are concerned, by the vast number of manuscripts existing of it. The *Host* is, so to speak, charged with the constant injunction of this cardinal principle of popularity as to both theme and style. "Tell us," he coolly demands of the most learned and sedate of all his fellow-travellers—

"... Some merry thing of ádventures;
Your termës, your coloúrs, and your figúres,
Keep them in store, till so be ye indite
High style, as when that men to kingës write;
Speak ye so plain at this time, we you pray,
That we may understandë that ye say."

And the *Clerk* follows the spirit of the injunction both by omitting, as impertinent, a proeme in which his original, Petrarch, gives a great deal of valuable, but not in its connection interesting, geographical information, and by adding a facetious moral to what he calls the "unrestful matter" of his story. Even the *Squire*, though, after the manner of young men, far more than his elders addicted to the grand style, and accordingly specially praised for his eloquence by the simple *Franklin*, prefers to reduce to its plain meaning the courtly speech of the Knight of the Brazen Steed. In connection with what was said above, it is observable that each of the *Tales* in subject suits its narrator. Not by chance is the all-but-Quixotic romance of *Palamon and Arcite*, taken by Chaucer from Bocaccio's *Teseide*, related by the *Knight*; not by chance does the *Clerk*, following Petrarch's Latin version of a story related by the same author, tell the even more improbable, but, in the plainness of its moral, infinitely more fructuous, tale of patient Griseldis. How well the *Second Nun* is fitted with a legend which carries us back a few centuries into the atmosphere of Hrosvitha's comedies, and suggests with the utmost verisimilitude the nature of a nun's lucubrations on the subject of marriage. It is impossible to go through the whole list of the *Tales*; but all may be truly said to be in keeping with the characters and manners (often equally indifferent) of their tellers—down to that of the *Nun's Priest*, which, brimful of humor as it is, has just the mild naughtiness about it which comes so drolly from a spiritual director in his worldlier hour.

Not a single one of these *Tales* can with any show of reason be ascribed to Chaucer's own invention. French literature—chiefly, though not solely, that of *Fabliaux*—doubtless supplied the larger share of his materials ; but that here also his debts to Italian literature, and to Boccaccio in particular, are considerable, seems hardly to admit of denial. But while Chaucer freely borrowed from foreign models, he had long passed beyond the stage of translating without assimilating. It would be rash to assume that where he altered he invariably improved. His was not the unerring eye which, like Shakspeare's in his dramatic transfusions of Plutarch, missed no particle of the gold mingled with the baser metal, but rejected the dross with sovereign certainty. In dealing with Italian originals more especially, he sometimes altered for the worse, and sometimes for the better ; but he was never a mere slavish translator. So in the *Knight's Tale* he may be held in some points to have deviated disadvantageously from his original ; but, on the other hand, in the *Clerk's Tale* he inserts a passage on the fidelity of women, and another on the instability of the multitude, besides adding a touch of nature irresistibly pathetic in the exclamation of the faithful wife, tried beyond her power of concealing the emotion within her :

"O gracious God ! how gentle and how kind
Ye seemèd by your speech and your viságe
The day that makèd was our marriáge."

So also in the *Man of Law's Tale*, which is taken from the French, he increases the vivacity of the narrative by a considerable number of apostrophes in his own favorite manner, besides pleasing the general reader by divers general reflections of his own inditing. Almost necessarily, the literary form and the self-consistency of his originals lose under such treatment. But his dramatic sense, on which, perhaps, his commentators have not always sufficiently dwelt, is rarely, if ever, at fault. Two illustrations of this gift in Chaucer must suffice, which shall be chosen in two quarters where he has worked with materials of the most widely different kind. Many readers must have compared with Dante's original (in canto xxxiii. of the *Inferno*) Chaucer's version in the *Monk's Tale* of the story of Ugolino. Chaucer, while he necessarily omits the ghastly introduction, expands the pathetic picture of the sufferings of the father and his sons in their dungeon, and closes, far more briefly and effectively than Dante, with a touch of the most refined pathos:—

"DE HUGILINO COMITE PISÆ.

"Of Hugolin of Pisa the languór
There may no tonguë tellë for pity.
But little out of Pisa stands a tower,
In whichë tower in prison put was he ;
And with him be his little children three.
The eldest scarcely five years was of age ;
Alas ! fortúne ! it was great cruelty
Such birds as these to put in such a cage.

"Condemned he was to die in that prisón,
For Royer, which that bishop was of Pise,
Had on him made a false suggestión,
Through which the people gan on him arise,
And put him in prisón in such a wise,
As ye have heard, and meat and drink he had
So little that it hardly might suffice,
And therewithal it was full poor and bad.

"And on a day befell that in that hour
When that his meat was wont to be y-brought,
The gaoler shut the doorës of that tower.
He heard it well, although he saw it not;
And in his heart anon there fell a thought
That they his death by hunger did devise.
'Alas!' quoth he—'alas! that I was wrought!'
Therewith the tearës fellë from his eyes.

"His youngest son, that three years was of age,
Unto him said: 'Father, why do ye weep?
When will the gaoler bring us our pottáge?
Is there no morsel bread that ye do keep?
I am so hungry that I cannot sleep.
Now wouldë God that I might sleep for ever!
Then should not hunger in my belly creep.
There is no thing save bread that I would liever.'

"Thus day by day this child began to cry,
Till in his father's lap adown he lay,
And saidë: 'Farewell, father, I must die!'
And kissed his father, and died the samë day.
The woeful father saw that dead he lay,
And his two arms for woe began to bite,
And said: 'Fortune, alas and well-away!
For all my woe I blame thy treacherous spite.'

"His children weened that it for hunger was,
That he his armës gnawed, and not for woe.
And saidë: 'Father, do not so, alas!
But rather eat the flesh upon us two.
Our flesh thou gavest us, our flesh thou take us fro,
And eat enough.' Right thus they to him cried;
And after that, within a day or two,
They laid them in his lap adown and died."

The father, in despair, likewise died of hunger; and such was the end of the mighty Earl of Pisa, whose tragedy whosoever desires to hear at greater length may read it as told by the great poet of Italy hight Dante.

The other instance is that of *The Pardoner's Tale*, which would appear to have been based on a *fabliau* now lost, though the substance of it is preserved in an Italian novel, and in one or two other versions. For the purpose of noticing how Chaucer arranges as well as tells a story, the following attempt at a condensed prose rendering of his narrative may be acceptable:—

Once upon a time in Flanders there was a company of young men, who gave themselves up to every kind of dissipation and debauchery

—haunting the taverns where dancing and dicing continues day and night, eating and drinking, and serving the devil in his own temple by their outrageous life of luxury. It was horrible to hear their oaths, how they tore to pieces our blessed Lord's body, as if they thought the Jews had not rent Him enough; and each laughed at the sin of the others, and all were alike immersed in gluttony and wantonness.

And so one morning it befell that three of these rioters were sitting over their drink in a tavern, long before the bell had rung for nine-o'clock prayers. And as they sat, they heard a bell clinking before a corpse that was being carried to the grave. So one of them bade his servant-lad go and ask what was the name of the dead man; but the boy said that he knew it already, and that it was the name of an old companion of his master's. As he had been sitting drunk on a bench, there had come a privy thief, whom men called Death, and who slew all the people in this country; and he had smitten the drunken man's heart in two with his spear, and had then gone on his way without any more words. This Death had slain a thousand during the present pestilence; and the boy thought it worth warning his master to beware of such an adversary, and to be ready to meet him at any time. "So my mother taught me; I say no more." "Marry," said the keeper of the tavern; "the child tells the truth: this Death has slain all the inhabitants of a great village not far from here; I think that there must be the place where he dwells." Then the rioter swore with some of his big oaths that he at least was not afraid of this Death, and that he would seek him out wherever he dwelt. And at his instance his two boon-companions joined with him in a vow that before nightfall they would slay the false traitor Death, who was the slayer of so many; and the vow they swore was one of closest fellowship between them—to live and die for one another as if they had been brethren born. And so they went forth in their drunken fury towards the village of which the taverner had spoken, with terrible execrations on their lips that "Death should be dead, if they might catch him."

They had not gone quite half a mile when, at a stil ebetween two fields, they came upon a poor old man, who meekly greeted them with a "God save you, sirs." But the proudest of the three rioters answered him roughly, asking him why he kept himself all wrapped up except his face, and how so old a fellow as he had managed to keep alive so long? And the old man looked him straight in the face and replied, "Because in no town or village, though I journey as far as the Indies, can I find a man willing to exchange his youth for my age; and therefore I must keep it so long as God wills it so. Death, alas! will not have my life, and so I wander about like a restless fugitive, and early and late I knock on the ground, which is my mother's gate, with my staff, and say, 'Dear mother, let me in! behold how I waste away! Alas! when shall my bones be at rest? Mother, gladly will I give you my chest containing all my worldly gear in return for a shroud to wrap me in.' But she refuses me that grace, and that is why my face is pale and withered. But you, sirs, are uncourteous to speak rudely to an inoffensive old man, when Holy Writ bids you reverence grey hairs. Therefore, never again give offence to an old man, if you wish men to be courteous to you in your age, should you live so long. And so God be with you; I must go whither I have to go." But the second rioter prevented him, and swore he should not depart so lightly. "Thou spakest just now of that traitor Death, who slays all our friends in this country. As thou art his spy, hear me swear that, unless thou tellest where he is, thou shalt die; for thou art in his plot to slay us young men, thou false thief!" Then the old man told them that if they were so desirous of finding Death, they had but to turn up a winding path to which he pointed, and there they would find him they sought in a grove under an oak-tree, where the old man had just left him; "he will not try to hide himself for all your boasting. And so may God the Redeemer save you and amend you!" And when he had spoken, all the three rioters ran till they came to the tree. But what they found there was a treasure of golden florins—nearly seven bushels of them, as they thought. Then they no longer sought after Death, but sat down all three by the shining gold. And the youngest of them spoke first, and declared that Fortune had given this treasure to them, so that they might spend the rest of their lives in mirth and jollity. The question was how to take this money—which clearly belonged to some one else—safely to the house of one of the three companions. It must be done by night; so let them draw lots, and let him on whom the lot fell run to the town to fetch bread and wine, while the other two guarded the treasure carefully till the night came, when they might agree whither to transport it.

The lot fell on the youngest, who forthwith went his way to the town. Then one of those who remained with the treasure said to the other: "Thou knowest well that thou art my sworn brother, and I will tell thee something to thy advantage. Our companion is gone, and here is a great quantity of gold to be divided among us three. But say, if I could manage so that the gold is divided between us two, should I not do thee a friend's turn?" And when the other failed to understand him, he made him promise secrecy, and disclosed his plan. "Two are stronger than one. When he sits down, arise as if thou wouldest sport with him; and while thou art struggling with him as in play, I will rive him through both his sides; and look thou do the same with thy dagger. After which, my dear friend, we will divide all the gold between you and me, and then we may satisfy all our desires and play at dice to our hearts' content.

Meanwhile the youngest rioter, as he went up to the town, revolved in his heart the beauty of the bright new florins, and said unto himself: "If only I could have all this gold to myself alone, there is no man on earth who would live so merrily as I." And at last the Devil put it into his relentless heart to buy poison, in order with it to kill his two companions. And straightway he went on into the town to an apothecary, and besought him to sell him some poison for destroying some rats which infested his house, and a polecat which, he said, had made away with his capons. And the apothecary said: "Thou shalt have something of which (so may God save my soul!) no creature in all the world could swallow a single grain without losing his life thereby—and that in less time than they wouldest take to walk a mile in." So the miscreant shut up this poison in a box, and then he went into the next street and borrowed three large bottles, into two of which he poured his poison, while the third he kept clean to hold drink for himself; for he meant to work hard all the night to carry away the gold. So he filled his three bottles with wine, and then went back to his companions under the tree,

What need to make a long discourse of what followed? As they had plotted their comrade's death, so they slew him, and that at once. And when they had done this, the one who had counselled the deed said, "Now let us sit and drink and make merry, and then we will bury his body." And it happened to him by chance to take one of the bottles which contained the poison; and he drank, and gave drink of it to his fellow; and thus they both speedily died.

The plot of this story is, as observed, not Chaucer's. But how carefully, how artistically, the narrative is elaborated, incident by incident, and point by point! How well every effort is prepared, and how well every turn of the story is explained! Nothing is superfluous, but everything is arranged with care, down to the circumstances of the bottles being bought, for safety's sake, in the next street to the apothecary's, and of two out of three bottles being filled with poison, which is at once a proceeding natural in itself, and increases the chances against the two rioters when they are left to choose for themselves. This it is to be a good story-teller. But of a different order is the change introduced by Chaucer into his original, where the old hermit —who, of course, is Death himself—is fleeing from Death. Chaucer's Old Man is *seeking* Death, but seeking him in vain—like the Wandering Jew of the legend. This it is to be a poet.

Of course it is always necessary to be cautious before asserting any apparent addition of Chaucer's to be his own invention. Thus, in the *Merchant's Tale*, the very naughty plot of which is anything but original, it is impossible to say whether such is the case with the humorous competition of advice between Justinus and Placebo,* or with the fantastic machinery in which Pluto and Proserpine anticipate the part played by Oberon and Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. On the other hand, Chaucer is capable of using goods manifestly borrowed or stolen for a purpose never intended in their original employment. Puck himself must have guided the audacious hand which could turn over the leaves of so respected a Father of the Church as St. Jerome, in order to derive from his treatise *On Perpetual Virginity* materials for the discourse on matrimony delivered, with illustrations essentially her own, by the *Wife of Bath.*

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* "Placebo" seems to have been a current term to express the character or the ways of "the too deferential man." "Flatterers be the Devil's chaplains, that sing aye *Placebo*."—*Parson's Tale*.

Two only among these *Tales* are in prose—a vehicle of expression, on the whole, strange to the polite literature of the pre-Renascence ages—but not both for the same reason. The first of these *Tales* is told by the poet himself, after a stop has been unceremoniously put upon his recital of the *Ballad of Sir Thopas* by the Host. The ballad itself is a fragment of straightforward burlesque, which shows that in both the manner and the metre* of ancient romances, literary criticism could even in Chaucer's days find its opportunities for satire, though it is going rather far to see in *Sir Thopas* a predecessor of *Don Quixote.* The *Tale of Melibœus* is probably an English version of a French translation of Albert of Brescia's famous *Book of Consolation and Counsel,* which comprehends in a slight narrative framework a long discussion between the unfortunate Miliboeus, whom the wrongs and sufferings inflicted upon him and his have brought to the verge of despair, and his wise helpmate, Dame Prudence. By means of a long argumentation propped up by quotations (not invariably assigned with conscientious accuracy to their actual source) from "The Book," Seneca, "Tullius," and other authors, she at last persuades him not only to reconcile himself to his enemies, but to forgive them, even as he hopes to be forgiven. And thus the Tale well bears out the truth impressed upon Meliboeus by the following ingeniously combined quotation :—

> And there said once a clerk in two verses: What is better than gold? Jasper. And what is better than jasper? Wisdom. And what is better than wisdom? Woman. And what is better than woman? No thing.

Certainly, Chaucer gave proof of consumate tact and taste, as well as of an unaffected personal modesty, in assigning to himself as one of the company of pilgrims, instead of a tale bringing him into competition with the creatures of his own invention, after his mocking ballad has served its turn, nothing more ambitious than a version of a popular discourse—half narrative, half homily—in prose. But a question of far greater difficulty and moment arises with regard to the other prose piece included among the *Canterbury Tales.* Of these the so-called *Parson's Tale* is the last in order of succession. Is it to be looked upon as an integral part of the collection; and, if so, what general and what personal significance should be attached to it?

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* **Dunbar's burlesque ballad of *Sir Thomas Norray* is in the same stanza.**

As it stands, the long tractate or sermon (partly adapted from a popular French religious manual), which bears the name of the *Parson's Tale*, is, if not unfinished, at least internally incomplete. It lacks symmetry, and fails entirely to make good the argument or scheme of divisions with which the sermon begins, as conscientiously as one of Barrow's. Accordingly, an attempt has been made to show that what we have is something different from the "meditation" which Chaucer originally put into his *Parson's* mouth. But, while we may stand in respectful awe of the German daring which, whether the matter in hand be a few pages of Chaucer, a Book of Homer, or a chapter of the Old Testament, is fully prepared to show which parts of each are mutilated, which interpolated, and which transposed, we may safely content ourselves, in the present instance, with considering the preliminary question. *A priori*, is there sufficient reason for supposing any transpositions, interpolations, and mutilations to have been introduced into the *Parson's Tale?* The question is full of interest; for while, on the one hand, the character of the *Parson* in the *Prologue* has been frequently interpreted as evidence of sympathy on Chaucer's part with Wycliffism, on the other hand the *Parson's Tale*, in its extant form, goes far to disprove the supposition that its author was a Wycliffite.

This, then, seems the appropriate place for briefly reviewing the vexed question—*Was Chaucer a Wycliffite?* Apart from the character of the *Parson* and from the *Parson's Tale*, what is the nature of our evidence on the subject? In the first place, nothing could be clearer than that Chaucer was a very free-spoken critic of the life of the clergy—more especially of the Regular clergy—of his times. In this character he comes before us from his translation of the *Roman de la Rose* to the *Parson's Tale* itself, where he inveighs with significant earnestness against self-indulgence on the part of those who are Religious, or have "entered into Orders, as sub-deacon, or deacon, or priest, or hospitallers." In the *Canterbury Tales*, above all, his attacks upon the Friars run nearly the whole gamut of satire, stopping short, perhaps, before the note of high moral indignation. Moreover, as has been seen, his long connection with John of Gaunt is a well-established fact; and it has thence been concluded that Chaucer fully shared the opinions and tendencies represented by his patron. In the supposition that Chaucer approved of the countenance for a long time shown by John of Gaunt to Wyclif there is nothing improbable; neither, however, is there anything improbable in this other supposition, that, when the Duke of Lancaster openly washed his hands of the heretical tenets to the utterance of which Wyclif had advanced, Chaucer, together with the large majority of Englishmen, held with the politic duke rather than with the still unflinching Reformer. So long as Wyclif's movement consisted only of an opposition to ecclesiastical pretensions on the one hand, and of an attempt to revive religious sentiment on the other, half the country or more was Wycliffite, and Chaucer no doubt with the rest. But it would require positive evidence to justify the belief that from this feeling Chaucer ever passed to sympathy with *Lollardry*, in the vague but sufficiently intelligible sense attaching to that term in the latter part of Richard the Second's reign. Richard II. himself, whose patronage of Chaucer is certain, in the end attempted rigorously to suppress Lollardry; and Henry IV., the politic John of Gaunt's yet more politic son, to whom Chaucer owed the prosperity enjoyed by him in the last year of his life, became a persecutor almost as soon as he became a king.

Though, then, from the whole tone of his mind, Chaucer could not but sympathize with the opponents of ecclesiastical domination—though, as a man of free and critical spirit, and of an inborn ability for penetrating beneath the surface, he could not but find subjects for endless blame and satire in the members of those Mendicant Orders in whom his chief patron's academical ally had recognized the most formidable obstacles to the spread of pure religion—yet all this would not justify us in regarding him as personally a Wycliffite. Indeed, we might as well at once borrow the phraseology of a recent respectable critic, and set down Dan Chaucer as a Puritan! The policy of his patron tallied with the view which a fresh practical mind such as Chaucer's would naturally be disposed to take of the influence of monks and friars, or at least of those monks and friars whose vices and foibles were specially prominent in his eyes. There are various reasons why men oppose established institutions in the season of their decay; but a fourteenth-century satirist of the monks, or even of the clergy at large, was not necessarily a Lollard any more than a nineteenth-century objector to doctors' drugs is necessarily a homœopathist.

But, it is argued by some, Chaucer has not only assailed the false; he has likewise extolled the true. He has painted both sides of the contrast. On the one side are the Monk, the Friar, and the rest of their fellows; on the other is the *Poor Parson of a Town*—a portrait, if not of Wyclif himself, at all events of a Wycliffite priest; and in the *Tale* or sermon put in the Parson's mouth are recognizable beneath the accumulations of interested editors some of the characteristic marks of Wycliffism. Who is not acquainted with the exquisite portrait in question?—

A good man was there of religión,
And was a poorë Parson of a town.
But rich he was of holy thought and work.
He was also a learnèd man, a clerk
That Christës Gospel truly wouldë preach;
And his parishoners devoutly teach.
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
And in adversity full patiént.
And such he was y-provèd oftë sithes.
Full loth he was to curse men for his tithes;
But rather would he givë, without doubt,
Unto his poor parishioners about
Of his off'ríng and eke of his substánce.
He could in little wealth have súffisance.

Wide was his parish, houses far asunder,
Yet failed he not for either rain or thunder
In sickness nor mischance to visit all
The furthest in his parish, great and small,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
This noble ensample to his sheep he gave,
That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught;
Out of the Gospel he those wordës caught;
And this figúre he added eke thereto,
That 'if gold rustë, what shall iron do?'
For if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,
No wonder is it if a layman rust;
And shame it is, if that a priest take keep,
A foul shepherd to see and a clean sheep;
Well ought a priest ensample for to give
By his cleannéss, how that his sheep should live.
He put not out his benefice on hire,
And left his sheep encumbered in the mire,
And ran to London unto Saintë Paul's,
To seek himself a chantery for souls,
Or maintenance with a brotherhood to hold;
But dwelt at home, and keptë well his fold,
So that the wolf ne'er made it to miscarry;
He was a shepherd and no mercenáry.
And though he holy were, and virtuous,
He was to sinful man not déspitous,
And of his speech nor difficult nor digne,
But in his teaching discreet and benign.
For to draw folk to heaven by fairnéss,
By good ensample, this was his business:
But were there any person obstinate,
What so he were, of high or low estate,
Him would he sharply snub at once. Than this
A better priest, I trow, there nowhere is.
He waited for no pomp and reverence,
Nor made himself a spicèd consciénce;
But Christës lore and His Apostles' twelve
He taught, but first he followed it himself."

The most striking features in this portrait are undoubtedly those which are characteristics of the good and humble working clergyman of all times; and some of these, accordingly, Goldsmith could appropriately borrow for his gentle poetic sketch of his parson-brother in "Sweet Auburn." But there are likewise points in the sketch which may be fairly described as specially distinctive of Wyclif's Simple Priests—though, as should be pointed out, these Priests could not themselves be designated parsons of towns. Among the latter features are the specially evangelical source of the *Parson's* learning and teaching; and his outward appearance—the wandering, staff in hand, which was specially noted in an archiepiscopal diatribe against these novel ministers of the people. Yet it seems unnecessary to conclude anything beyond this: that the feature which Chaucer desired above all to mark and insist upon in his *Parson*, was the poverty and humility which in him contrasted with the luxurious self-indulgence of the *Monk*, and the blatant insolence of the *Pardoner*. From this point of view it is obvious why the *Parson* is made brother to the *Ploughman;* for, in drawing the latter, Chaucer cannot have forgotten that other Ploughman whom Langland's poem had identified with Him for whose sake Chaucer's poor workman labored for his poor neighbors, with the readiness always shown by the best of his class. Nor need this recognition of the dignity of the lowly surprise us in Chaucer, who had both sense of justice and sense of humor enough not to flatter one class at the expense of the rest, and who elsewhere (in the *Manciple's Tale*) very forcibly puts the truth that what in a great man is called a *coup d'état* is called by a much simpler name in a humbler fellow,sinner.

But though, in the *Parson of a Town*, Chaucer may not have wished to paint a Wycliffite priest—still less a Lollard, under which designation so many varieties of malcontents, in addition to the followers of Wyclif, were popularly included—yet his eyes and ears were open; and he knew well enough what the world and its children are at all times apt to call those who are not ashamed of their religion, as well as those who make too conscious a profession of it. The world called them Lollards at the close of the fourteenth century, and it called them Puritans at the close of the sixteenth, and Methodists at the close of the eighteenth. Doubtless the vintners and the shipmen of Chaucer's day, the patrons and purveyors of the playhouse in Ben Jonson's, the fox-hunting squires and town wits of Cowper's, like their successors after them, were not specially anxious to distinguish nicely between more or less abominable varieties of saintliness. Hence, when Master Harry Bailly's tremendous oaths produce the gentlest of protests from the *Parson*, the jovial *Host* incontinently "smells a Lollard in the wind," and predicts (with a further flow of expletives) that there is a sermon to follow. Whereupon the *Shipman* protests not less characteristically:—

"'Nay, by my father's soul, that shall he not,'
Saidë the Shipman; 'here shall he not preach:
He shall no gospel here explain or teach.
We all believe in the great God,' quoth he;
'He wouldë sowë some difficulty,
Or springë cockle in our cleanë corn.'"*

After each of the pilgrims except the *Parson* has told a tale (so that obviously Chaucer designed one of the divisions of his work to close with the *Parson's*), he is again called upon by the *Host*. Hereupon appealing to the undoubtedly evangelical and, it might without straining be said, Wycliffite authority of Timothy, he promises as his contribution a "merry tale in prose," which proves to consist of a moral discourse. In its extant form the *Parson's Tale* contains, by the side of much that might suitably have come from a Wycliffite teacher, much of a directly opposite nature. For not only is the necessity of certain sacramental usages to which Wyclif strongly objected insisted upon but the spoliation of Church property is unctuously inveighed against as a species of one of the cardinal sins. No enquiry could satisfactorily establish how much of this was taken over or introduced into the *Parson's Tale* by Chaucer himself. But one would fain at least claim for him a passage in perfect harmony with the character drawn of the *Parson* in the *Prologue*—a passage (already cited in part in the opening section of the present essay) where the poet advocates the cause of the poor in words which, simple as they are, deserve to be quoted side by side with that immortal character itself. The concluding lines may therefore be cited here:—

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* The nickname Lollards was erroneously derived from *lolia* (tares).

> "Think also that of the same seed of which churls spring, of the same seed spring lords; as well may the churl be saved as the lord. Wherefore I counsel thee, do just so with thy churl as thou wouldest thy lord did with thee, if thou wert in his plight. A very sinful man is a churl as towards sin. I counsel thee certainly, thou lord, that thou work in such wise with thy churls that they rather love thee than dread thee. I know well, where there is degree above degree, it is reasonable that men should do their duty where it is due; but of a certainty, extortions, and despite of our underlings, are damnable."

In sum, the *Parson's Tale* cannot, any more than the character of the *Parson* in the *Prologue*, be interpreted as proving Chaucer to have been a Wycliffite. But the one as well as the other proves him to have perceived much of what was noblest in the Wycliffite movement, and much of what was ignoblest in the reception with which it met at the hands of worldlings—before, with the aid of the State, the Church finally succeeded in crushing it, to all appearance, out of existence.

The *Parson's Tale* contains a few vigorous touches, in addition to the fine passage quoted, which make it difficult to deny that Chaucer's hand was concerned in it. The inconsistency between the religious learning ascribed to the *Parson* and a passage in the *Tale*, where the author leaves certain things to be settled by divines, will not be held of much account. The most probable conjecture seems, therefore, to be that the discourse has come down to us in a mutilated form. This *may* be due to the *Tale* having remained unfinished at the time of Chaucer's death; in which case it would form last words of no unfitting kind. As for the actual last words of the *Canterbury Tales*—the so-called *Prayer of Chaucer*—it would be unbearable to have to accept them as genuine. For in these the poet, while praying for the forgiveness of sins, is made specially to entreat the Divine pardon for his "translations and inditing in worldly vanities," which he "revokes in his retractions." These include, besides the Book of the Leo (doubtless a translation or adaptation from Machault) and many other books which the writer forgets, and "many a song and many a lecherous lay," all the principal poetical works of Chaucer (with the exception of the *Romaunt of the Rose*) discussed in this essay. On the other hand, he offers thanks for having had the grace given him to compose his translation of Boëthius and other moral and devotional works. There is, to be sure, no actual evidence to decide in either way the question as to the genuineness of this *Prayer*, which is entirely one of internal probability. Those who will may believe that the monks, who were the landlords of Chaucer's house at Westminster, had in one way or the other obtained a controlling influence over his mind. Stranger things than this have happened; but one prefers to believe that the poet of the *Canterbury Tales* remained master of himself to the last. He had written much which a dying man might regret; but it would be sad to have to think that, "because of humility," he bore false witness at the last against an immortal part of himself—his poetic genius.

CHAPTER III.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHAUCER AND OF HIS POETRY.

THUS, then, Chaucer had passed away—whether in good or in evil odor with the powerful interest with which John of Gaunt's son had entered into his unwritten concordate, after all, matters but little now. He is no dim shadow to us, even in his outward presence; for we possess sufficient materials from which to picture to ourselves with good assurance what manner of man he was. Occleve painted from memory, on the margin of one of his own works, a portrait of his "worthy master," over against a passage in which, after praying the Blessed Virgin to intercede for the eternal happiness of one who had written so much in her honor, he proceeds as follows:—

"Although his life be quenched, the résemblance
Of him hath in me so fresh liveliness,
That to put other men in rémembrance
Of his persón I have here his likenéss
Made, to this end in very soothfastness,
That they that have of him lost thought and mind
May by the painting here again him find."

In this portrait, in which the experienced eye of Sir Harris Nicolas sees "incomparably the best portrait of Chaucer yet discovered," he appears as an elderly rather than aged man, clad in dark gown and hood—the latter of the fashion so familiar to us from this very picture, and from the well-known one of Chaucer's last patron, King Henry IV. His attitude in this likeness is that of a quiet talker, with downcast eyes, but sufficiently erect bearing of body. One arm is extended, and seems to be gently pointing to some observation which has just issued from the poet's lips. The other holds a rosary, which may be significant of the piety attributed to Chaucer by Occleve, or may be a mere ordinary accompaniment of conversation, as it is in parts of Greece to the present day. The features are mild but expressive, with just a suspicion—certainly no more—of saturnine or sarcastic humor. The lips are full, and the nose is what is called good by the learned in such matters. Several other early portraits of Chaucer exist, all of which are stated to bear much resemblance to one another. Among them is one in an early if not contemporary copy of Occleve's poems, full-length, and superscribed by the hand which wrote the manuscript. In another, which is extremely quaint, he appears on horseback, in commemoration of his ride to Canterbury, and is represented as short of stature, in accordance with the description of himself in the *Canterbury Tales.*

For, as it fortunately happens, he has drawn his likeness for us with his own hand, as he appeared on the occasion to that most free-spoken of observers and most personal of critics, the host of the Tabard, the "cock" and marshal of the company of pilgrims. The fellow-travellers had just been wonderfully sobered (as well they might be) by the piteous tale of the Prioress concerning the little clergy-boy—how, after the wicked Jews had cut his throat because he ever sang *O Alma Redemptoris*, and had cast him into a pit, he was found there by his mother loudly giving forth the hymn in honor of the Blessed Virgin which he had loved so well. Master Harry Bailly was, as in duty bound, the first to interrupt by a string of jests the silence which had ensued:—

> "And then at first he lookèd upon me,
> And saidë thus: 'What man art thou?' quoth he;
> 'Thou lookèst as thou wouldèst find a hare,
> For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.
> Approach more near, and lookë merrily!
> Now 'ware you, sirs, and let this man have space.
> He in the waist is shaped as well as I;
> This were a puppet in an arm to embrace
> For any woman, small and fair of face.
> He seemeth elfish by his countenance,
> For unto no wight doth he dalliánce.'"

From this passage we may gather, not only that Chaucer was, as the *Host* of the Tabard's transparent self-irony implies, small of stature and slender, but that he was accustomed to be twitted on account of the abstracted or absent look which so often tempts children of the world to offer its wearer a penny for his thoughts. For "elfish" means bewitched by the elves, and hence vacant or absent in demeanor.

It is thus, with a few modest but manifestly truthful touches, that Chaucer, after the manner of certain great painters, introduces his own figure into a quiet corner of his crowded canvas. But mere outward likeness is of little moment, and it is a more interesting enquiry whether there are any personal characteristics of another sort, which it is possible with safety to ascribe to him, and which must be, in a greater or less degree, connected with the distinctive qualilies of his literary genius; for in truth it is but a sorry makeshift of literary biographers to seek to divide a man who is an author into two separate beings, in order to avoid the conversely fallacious procedure of accounting for everything which an author has written by something which the *man* has done or been inclined to do. What true poet has sought to hide, or succeeded in hiding, his moral nature from his muse? None in the entire band, from Petrarch to Villon, and least of all the poet whose song, like so much of Chaucer's, seems freshly derived from Nature's own inspiration.

One very pleasing quality in Chaucer must have been his modesty. In the course of his life this may have helped to recommend him to patrons so many and so various, and to make him the useful and trustworthy agent that he evidently became for confidential missions abroad. Physically, as has been seen, he represents himself as prone to the habit of casting his eyes on the ground; and we may feel tolerably sure that to this external manner corresponded a quiet, observant disposition, such as that which may be held to have distinguished the greatest of Chaucer's successors among English poets. To us, of course, this quality of modesty in Chaucer makes itself principally manifest in the opinion which he incidentally shows himself to entertain concerning his own rank and claims as an author. Herein, as in many other points, a contrast is noticeable between him and the great Italian masters, who were so sensitive as to the esteem in which they and their poetry were held. Who could fancy Chaucer crowned with laurel, like Petrarch, or even, like Dante, speaking with proud humility of "the beautiful style that has done honor to him," while acknowledging his obligation for it to a great predecessor? Chaucer again and again disclaims all boasts of perfection, or pretensions to pre-eminence, as a poet. His Canterbury Pilgrims have in his name to disavow, like Persius, having slept on Mount Parnassus, or possessing "rhetoric" enough to describe a heroine's beauty; and he openly allows that his spirit grows dull as he grows older, and that he finds a difficulty as a translator in matching his rhymes to his French original. He acknowledges as incontestable the superiority of the poets of classical antiquity:—

> ". . . Little brook, no writing thou envy,
> But subject be to all true poësy,
> And kiss the steps, where'er thou seest space
> Of Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan, Stace."*

But more than this. In the *House of Fame* he expressly disclaims having in his light and imperfect verse sought to pretend to "mastery" in the art poetical; and in a charmingly expressed passage of the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women* he describes himself as merely following in the wake of those who have already reaped the harvest of amorous song, and have carried away the corn:—

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* Statius.

> "And I come after, gleaning here and there,
> And am full glad if I can find an ear
> Of any goodly word that ye have left."

Modesty of this stamp is perfectly compatible with a certain self-consciousness which is hardly ever absent from greatness, and which at all events supplies a stimulus not easily dispensed with except by sustained effort on the part of a poet. The two qualities seem naturally to combine into that self-containedness (very different from self-contentedness) which distinguishes Chaucer, and which helps to give to his writings a manliness of tone, the direct opposite of the irretentive querulousness found in so great a number of poets in all times. He cannot, indeed, be said to maintain an absolute reserve concerning himself and his affairs in his writings; but as he grows older, he seems to become less and less inclined to take the public into his confidence, or to speak of himself except in a pleasantly light and incidental fashion. And in the same spirit he seems, without ever folding his hands in his lap, or ceasing to be a busy man and an assiduous author, to have grown indifferent to the lack of brilliant success in life, whether as a man of letters or otherwise. So at least one seems justified in interpreting a remarkable passage in the *House of Fame*, the poem in which, perhaps, Chaucer allows us to see more deeply into his mind than in any other. After surveying the various company of those who had come as suitors for the favors of Fame, he tells us how it seemed to him (in his long December dream) that some one spoke to him in a kindly way,

> 'And saidë: 'Friend, what is thy name?
> Art thou come hither to have fame?'
> 'Nay, forsoothë, friend!' quoth I;
> 'I came not hither (grand merci!)
> For no such causë, by my head!
> Sufficeth me, as I were dead,
> That no wight have my name in hand.
> I wot myself best how I stand;
> For what I suffer, or what I think,
> I will myselfë all it drink,
> Or at least the greater part
> As far forth as I know my art.'"

With this modest but manly self-possession we shall not go far wrong in connecting what seems another very distinctly marked feature of Chaucer's inner nature. He seems to have arrived at a clear recognition of the truth with which Goethe humorously comforted Eckermann in the shape of the proverbial saying, "Care has been taken that the trees shall not grow into the sky." Chaucer's, there is every reason to believe, was a contented faith, as far removed from self-torturing unrest as from childish credulity. Hence his refusal to trouble himself, now that he has arrived at a good age, with original research as to the contellations. (The passage is all the more significant since Chaucer, as has been seen, actually possessed a very respectable knowledge of astronomy.) That winged encyclopædia, the Eagle, has just been regretting the poet's unwillingness to learn the position of the Great and the Little Bear, Castor and Pollux, and the rest, concerning which at present he does not know where they stand. But he replies, "No matter!

"'. . . It is no need;
I trust as well (so God me speed!)
Them that write of this mattér,
As though I knew their places there.'"

Moreover, as he says (probably without implying any special allegorical meaning), they seem so bright that it would destroy my eyes to look upon them. Personal inspection, in his opinion, was not necessary for a faith which at some times may, and at others must, take the place of knowledge; for we find him, at the opening of the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*, in a passage the tone of which should not be taken to imply less than its words express, writing as follows:—

"A thousand timës I have heard men tell,
That there is joy in heaven, and pain in hell;
And I accordë well that it is so.
But nathëless, yet wot I well alsó,
That there is none doth in this country dwell
That either hath in heaven been or hell,
Or any other way could of it know,
But that he heard, or found it written so,
For by assay may no man proof receive.
  But God forbid that men should not believe
More things than they have ever seen with eye!
Men shall not fancy everything a lie
Unless themselves it see, or else it do;
For, God wot, not the less a thing is true,
Though every wight may not it chance to see."

The central thought of these lines, though it afterwards receives a narrower and more commonplace application, is no other than that which has been so splendidly expressed by Spenser in the couplet:—

"Why then should witless man so much misween
That nothing is but that which he hath seen?"

The *negative* result produced in Chaucer's mind by this firm but placid way of regarding matters of faith was a distrust of astrology, alchemy, and all the superstitions which in the *Parson's Tale* are noticed as condemned by the Church. This distrust on Chaucer's part requires no further illustration after what has been said elsewhere; it would have been well for his age if all its children had been as clear-sighted in these matters as he, to whom the practices connected with these delusive sciences seemed, and justly so from his point of view, not less impious than futile. His *Canon Yeoman's Tale*, a story of imposture so vividly dramatic in its catastrophe as to have suggested to Ben Jonson one of the most effective passages in his comedy *The Alchemist*, concludes with a moral of unmistakable solemnity against the sinfulness, as well as uselessness, of "multiplying" (making gold by the arts of alchemy):—

> ". . . Whoso maketh God his adversáry,
> As for to work anything in contràry
> Unto His will, certes ne'er shall he thrive,
> Though that he multiply through all his life."

But equally unmistakable is the *positive* side of this frame of mind in such a passage as the following—which is one of those belonging to Chaucer himself, and not taken from his French original—in *The Man of Law's Tale*. The narrator is speaking of the voyage of Constance, after her escape from the massacre in which, at a feast, all her fellow-Christians had been killed, and of how she was borne by the "wild wave" from "Surrey" (Syria) to the Northumbrian shore:—

> "Here men might askë, why she was not slain?
> Eke at the feast who might her body save?
> And I answérë that demand again:
> Who savèd Daniel in th' horrible cave,
> When every wight save him, master or knave,
> The lion ate—before he could depart?
> No wight but God, whom he bare in his heart."

"In her," he continues, "God desired to show His miraculous power, so that we should see His mighty works; for Christ, in whom we have a remedy for every ill, often by means of His own does things for ends of His own, which are obscure to the wit of man, incapable, by reason of our ignorance, of understanding His wise providence. But since Constance was not slain at the feast, it might be asked: Who kept her from drowning in the sea? Who, then, kept Jonas in the belly of the whale till he was spouted up at Ninive? Well do we know it was no one but He who kept the Hebrew people from drowning in the waters, and made them to pass through the sea with dry feet. Who bade the four spirits of the tempest, which have the power to trouble land and sea, north and south, and west and east, vex neither sea nor land nor the trees that grow on it? Truly these things were ordered by Him who kept this woman safe from the tempest, as well when she awoke as when she slept. But whence might this woman have meat and drink, and how could her sustenance last out to her for three years and more? Who, then, fed Saint Mary the Egyptian in the cavern or in the desert? Assuredly no one but Christ. It was a great miracle to feed five thousand folk with five loaves and two fishes; but God in their great need sent to them abundance."

As to the sentiments and opinions of Chaucer, then, on matters such as these, we can entertain no reasonable doubt. But we are altogether too ill acquainted with the details of his personal life, and with the motives which contributed to determine its course, to be able to arrive at any valid conclusions as to the way in which his principles affected his conduct. Enough has been already said concerning the attitude seemingly observed by him towards the great public questions and the great historical events of his day. If he had strong political opinions of his own, or strong personal views on questions either of ecclesiastical policy or of religious doctrine—in which assumptions there seems nothing probable—he, at all events, did not wear his heart on his sleeve, or use his poetry, allegorical or otherwise, as a vehicle of his wishes, hopes, or fears on these heads. The true breath of freedom could hardly be expected to blow through the precincts of a Plantagenet court. If Chaucer could write the pretty lines in the *Manciple's Tale* about the caged bird and its uncontrollable desire for liberty, his contemporary Barbour could apostrophize Freedom itself as a noble thing, in words the simple manliness of which stirs the blood after a very different fashion. Concerning his domestic relations, we may regard it as virtually certain that he was unhappy as a husband, though tender and affectionate as a father. Considering how vast a proportion of the satire of all times—but more especially that of the Middle Ages, and in these again pre-eminently of the period of European literature which took its tone from Jean de Meung—is directed against woman and against married life, it would be difficult to decide how much of the irony, sarcasm, and fun lavished by Chaucer on these themes is due to a fashion with which he readily fell in, and how much to the impulse of personal feeling. A perfect anthology, or perhaps one should rather say a complete herbarium, might be collected from his works of samples of these attacks on women. He has manifestly made a careful study of their ways, with which he now and then betrays that curiously intimate acquaintance to which we are accustomed in a Richardson or a Balzac. How accurate are such incidental remarks as this, that women are "full measurable" in such matters as sleep—not caring for so much of it at a time as men do! How wonderfully natural is the description of Cressid's bevy of lady-visitors, attracted by the news that she is shortly to be surrendered to the Greeks, and of the "nice vanity"—*i. e.*, foolish emptiness—of their consolatory gossip. "As men see in town, and all about, that women are accustomed to visit their friends," so a swarm of ladies came to Cressid, "and sat themselves down, and said as I shall tell. 'I am delighted,' says one, 'that you will so soon see your father.' 'Indeed I am not so delighted,' says another, 'for we have not seen half enough of her since she has been at Troy,' 'I do hope,' quoth the third, 'that she will bring us back peace with her; in which case may Almighty God guide her on her departure.' And Cressid heard these words and womanish things as if she were far away; for she was burning all the time with another passion than any of which they knew; so that she almost felt her heart die for woe, and for weariness of that company." But his satire against women is rarely so innocent as this; and though several ladies take part in the Canterbury Pilgrimage, yet pilgrim after pilgrim has his saw or jest against their sex. The courteous *Knight* cannot refrain from the generalization that women all follow the favor of fortune. The *Summoner*, who is of a less scrupulous sort, introduces a diatribe against women's passionate love of vengeance; and the *Shipman* seasons a story which requires no such addition by an enumeration of their favorite foibles. But the climax is reached in the confessions of the *Wife of Bath*, who quite unhesitatingly says that women are best won by flattery and busy attentions; that when won they desire to have the sovereignty over their husbands, and that they tell untruths and swear to them with twice the boldness of men; while as to the power of their tongue, she quotes the second-hand authority of her fifth husband for the saying that it is better to dwell with a lion or a foul dragon than with a woman accustomed to chide. It is true that this same *Wife of Bath* also observes with an effective *tu quoque*:—

> " By God, if women had but written stories,
> As clerkës have within their oratòries,
> They would have writ of men more wickednéss
> Than all the race of Adam may redress ;"

and the *Legend of Good Women* seems, in point of fact, to have been intended to offer some such kind of amends as is here declared to be called for. But the balance still remains heavy against the poet's sentiments of gallantry and respect for women. It should, at the same time, be remembered that among the *Canterbury Tales* the two which are of their kind the most effective constitute tributes to the most distinctively feminine and wifely virtue of fidelity. Moreover, when coming from such personages as the pilgrims who narrate the *Tales* in question, the praise of women has special significance and value. The *Merchant* and the *Shipman* may indulge in facetious or coarse jibes against wives and their behavior; but the *Man of Law*, full of grave experience of the world, is a witness above suspicion to the womanly virtue of which his narrative celebrates so illustrious an example, while the *Clerk of Oxford* has in his cloistered solitude, where all womanly blandishments are unknown, come to the conclusion that

> " Men speak of Job, most for his humbleness,
> As clerkës, when they list, can well indite,
> Of men in special ; but, in truthfulness,
> Though praise by clerks of women be but slight,
> No man in humbleness can him acquit
> As women can, nor can be half so true
> As women are, unless all things be new."

As to marriage, Chaucer may be said generally to treat it in that style of laughing with a wry mouth, which has from time immemorial been affected both in comic writing and on the comic stage, but which in the end even the most determined old bachelor feels an occasional inclination to consider monotonous.

In all this, however, it is obvious that something at least must be set down to conventionality. Yet the best part of Chaucer's nature, it is hardly necessary to say, was neither conventional nor commonplace. He was not, we may rest assured, one of that numerous class which in his days, as it does in ours, composed the population of the land of Philistia—the persons so well defined by the Scottish poet, Sir David Lyndsay (himself a courtier of the noblest type):—

> "Who fixèd have their hearts and whole intents
> On sensual lust, on dignity, and rents."

Doubtless Chaucer was a man of practical good sense, desirous of suitable employment and of a sufficient income; nor can we suppose him to have been one of those who look upon social life and its enjoyments with a jaundiced eye, or who, absorbed in things which are not of this world, avert their gaze from it altogether. But it is hardly possible that rank and position should have been valued on their own account by one who so repeatedly recurs to his ideal of the true gentleman, as to a conception dissociated from mere outward circumstances, and more particularly independent of birth or inherited wealth. At times, we know, men find what they seek; and so Chaucer found in Boëthius and in Guillaume de Lorris that conception which he both translates and reproduces, besides repeating it in a little *Ballade*, probably written by him in the last *decennium* of his life. By far the best-known and the finest of these passages is that in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, which follows the round assertion that the "arrogance" against which it protests is not worth a hen; and which is followed by an appeal to a parallel passage in Dante:—

> "Look, who that is most virtuous alway
> Privy and open, and most intendeth aye
> To do the gentle deedës that he can,
> Take him for the greatest gentleman.
> Christ wills we claim of Him our gentleness,
> Not of our elders for their old richés.
> For though they give us all their heritáge
> Through which we claim to be of high paráge,
> Yet may they not bequeathë for no thing—
> To none of us—their virtuous livíng,
> That made them gentlemen y-callèd be,
> And bade us follow them in such degree.
> Well can the wisë poet of Florénce,
> That Dante hightë, speak of this senténce;
> Lo, in such manner of rhyme is Dante's tale:
> 'Seldom upriseth by its branches small
> Prowess of man; for God of His prowéss
> Wills that we claim of Him our gentleness;
> For of our ancestors we no thing claim
> But temporal thing, that men may hurt and maim.'"*

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* The passage in Canto viii. of the *Purgatorio* is thus translated by Longfellow:

By the still ignobler greed of money for its own sake, there is no reason whatever to suppose Chaucer to have been at any time actuated; although, under the pressure of immediate want, he devoted a *Complaint* to his empty purse, and made known, in the proper quarters, his desire to see it refilled. Finally, as to what is commonly called pleasure, he may have shared the fashions and even the vices of his age; but we know hardly anything on the subject, except that excess in wine, which is often held a pardonable peccadillo in a poet, receives his emphatic condemnation. It would be hazardous to assert of him, as Herrick asserted of himself, that though his "Muse was jocund, his life was chaste; inasmuch as his name occurs in one unfortunate connection full of suspiciousness. But we may at least believe him to have spoken his own sentiments in the Doctor of Physic's manly declaration that

"... Of all treason sovereign pestilence
Is when a man betrayeth innocence."

His true pleasures lay far away from those of vanity and dissipation. In the first place, he seems to have been a passionate reader. To his love of books he is constantly referring; indeed, this may be said to be the only kind of egotism which he seems to take a pleasure in indulging. At the opening of his earliest extant poem of consequence, the *Book of the Duchess*, he tells us how he preferred to drive away a night rendered sleepless through melancholy thoughts, by means of a book, which he thought better entertainment than a game either at chess or at "tables." This passion lasted longer with him than the other passion which it had helped to allay; for in the sequel to the well-known passage in the *House of Fame*, already cited, he gives us a glimpse of himself at home, absorbed in his favorite pursuit:—

"Thou go'st home to thy house anon,
And there, as dumb as any stone,
Thou sittest at another book,
Till fully dazèd is thy look;
And liv'st thus as a hermit quite,
Although thy abstinence is slight."

And doubtless he counted the days lost in which he was prevented from following the rule of life which elsewhere he sets himself, "to study and to read alway, day by day," and pressed even the nights into his service when he was not making his head ache with writing. How

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"Not oftentimes upriseth through the branches
The probity of man; and this He wills
Who gives it, so that we may ask of Him."

Its intention is only to show that the son is not necessarily what the father is before him; thus, Edward I. of England is a mightier man than was his father Henry III. Chaucer has ingeniously, though not altogether legitimately, pressed the passage into his service.

eager and, considering the times in which he lived, how diverse a reader he was, has already been abundantly illustrated in the course of this volume. His knowledge of Holy Writ was considerable, though it probably, for the most part, came to him second-hand. He seems to have had some acquaintance with patristic and homiletic literature; he produced a version of the homily on Mary Magdalene, improperly attributed to Origen; and, as we have seen, emulated King Alfred in translating Boëthius's famous manual of moral philosophy. His Latin learning extended over a wide range of literature, from Virgil and Ovid down to some of the favorite Latin poets of the Middle Ages. It is to be feared that he occasionally read Latin authors with so eager a desire to arrive at the contents of their books that he at times mistook their meaning—not far otherwise, slightly to vary a happy comparison made by one of his most eminent commentators, than many people read Chaucer's own writings nowadays. That he possessed any knowledge at all of Greek may be doubted, both on general grounds and on account of a little slip or two in quotation of a kind not unusual with those who quote what they have not previously read. His *Troilus and Cressid* has only a very distant connection, indeed, with Homer, whose *Iliad*, before it furnished materials for the mediæval Troilus-legend, had been filtered through a brief Latin epitome, and diluted into a Latin novel, and a journal kept at the seat of war, of altogether apocryphal value. And, indeed, it must in general he conceded that, if Chaucer had read much, he lays claim to having read more; for he not only ascribed to known authors works which we can by no means feel certain as to their having written, but at times he even cites (or is made to cite, in all the editions of his works) authors who are altogether unknown to fame by the names which he gives to them. But then it must be remembered that other mediæval writers have rendered themselves liable to the same kind of charge. Quoting was one of the dominant literary fashions of the age; and just as a word without an oath went for but little in conversation, so a statement or sentiment in writing acquired a greatly enhanced value when suggesed by authority, even after no more precise a fashion than the use of the phrase "as old books say." In Chaucer's days the equivalent of the modern "I have seen it said *somewhere*"—with, perhaps, the venturesome addition: "I *think*, in Horace"—had clearly not become an objectionable expletive.

Of modern literatures there can be no doubt that Chaucer had made substantially his own the two which could be of importance to him as a poet. His obligations to the French singers have probably been overestimated—at all events, if the view adopted in this essay be the correct one, and if the charming poem of the *Flower and the Leaf*, together with the lively, but as to it meaning not very transparent, so-called *Chaucer's Dream*, be denied admission among his genuine works. At the same time, the influence of the *Roman de la Rose* and that of the courtly poets, of whom Machault was the chief in France and Froissart the representative in England, are perceptible in Chaucer almost to the last, nor is it likely that he should ever have ceased to study and assimilate them. On the other hand, the extent of his knowledge of Italian literature has probably till of late been underrated in an almost equal degree. This knowledge displays itself not only in the imitation or adaptation of particular poems, but more especially in the use made of incidental passages and details. In this way his debts to Dante were especially numerous; and it is curious to find proofs so abundant of Chaucer's relatively close study of a poet with whose genius his own had so few points in common. Notwithstanding first appearances, it is an open question whether Chaucer had ever red Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, with which he may merely have had in common the sources of several of his *Canterbury Tales*. But as he certainly took one of them from the *Teseide* (without improving it in the process), and not less certainly, and adapted the *Filostrato* in his *Troilus and Cressid*, it is strange that he should refrain from naming the author to whom he was more indebted than to any one other for poetic materials.

But wide and diverse as Chaucer's reading fairly deserves to be called, the love of nature was even stronger and more absorbing in him than the love of books. He has himself, in a very charming passage, compared the strength of the one and of the other of his predilections:—

> "And as for me, though I have knowledge slight,
> In bookës for to read I me delight,
> And to them give I faith and full credénce,
> And in my heart have them in reverence
> So heartily, that there is gamë none
> That from my bookës maketh me be gone,
> But it be seldom on the holiday—
> Save, certainly, when that the month of May
> Is come, and that I hear the fowlës sing,
> And see the flowers as they begin to spring,
> Farewell my book, and my devotión."

Undoubtedly the literary fashion of Chaucer's times is responsible for part of this May-morning sentiment, with which he is fond of beginning his poems (the Canterbury pilgrimage is dated towards the end of April—but is not April "messenger to May?"). It had been decreed that flowers should be the badges of nations and dynasties, and the tokens of amorous sentiment; the rose had its votaries, and the lily lauded by Chaucer's *Prioress* as the symbol of the Blessed Virgin; while the daisy, which first sprang from the tears of a forlorn damsel, in France gave its name (*marguérite*) to an entire species of courtly verse. The enthusiastic adoration professed by Chaucer, in the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*, for the daisy, which he afterwards identifies with the good Alceste, the type of faithful wifehood, is, of course, a mere poetical figure. But there is in his use of these favorite literary devices, so to speak, a variety in sameness significant of their accordance with his own taste, and of the frank and fresh love of nature which animated him, and which seems to us as much a part of him as his love of books. It is unlikely that his personality will ever become more fully known than it is at present; nor is there anything in respect of which we seem to see so clearly into his inner nature as with regard to these twin predilections, to which he remains true in all his works and in all his moods. While the study of books was his chief passion, nature was his chief joy and solace; while his genius enabled him to transfuse what he read in the former, what came home to him in the latter was akin to that genius itself; for he at times reminds us of his own fresh Canace, whom he describes as looking so full of happiness during her walk through the wood at sunrise:—

> "What for the season, what for the morning
> And for the fowlës that she heardë sing,
> For right anon she wistë what they meant
> Right by their song, and knew all their intent."

If the above view of Chaucer's character and intellectual tastes and tendencies be in the main correct, there will seem to be nothing paradoxical in describing his literary progress, so far as its *data* are ascertainable, as a most steady and regular one. Very few men awake to find themselves either famous or great of a sudden, and perhaps as few poets as other men, though it may be heresy against a venerable maxim to say so. Chaucer's works form a clearly recognizable series of steps towards the highest achievement of which, under the circumstances in which he lived and wrote, he can be held to have been capable; and his long and arduous self-training, whether consciously or not directed to a particular end, was of that sure kind from which genius itself derives strength. His beginnings as a writer were dictated, partly by the impulse of that imitative faculty which, in poetic natures, is the usual precursor of the creative, partly by the influence of prevailing tastes and the absence of native English literary predecessors whom, considering the circumstances of his life and the nature of his temperament, he could have found it a congenial task to follow. French poems were, accordingly, his earliest models; but fortunately (unlike Gower, whom it is so instructive to compare with Chaucer, precisely because the one lacked that gift of genius which the other possessed) he seems at once to have resolved to make use for his poetical writings of his native speech. In no way, therefore, could he have begun his career with so happy a promise of its future as in that which he actually chose. Nor could any course so naturally have led him to introduce into his poetic diction the French idioms and words already used in the spoken language of Englishmen, more especially in those classes for which he in the first instance wrote, and thus to confer upon our tongue the great benefit which it owes to him. Again, most fortunately, others had already pointed the way to the selection for literary use of that English dialect which was probably the most suitable for the purpose; and Chaucer, as a Southern man (like his *Parson of a Town*), belonged to a part of the country where the old alliterative verse had long since been discarded for classical and romance forms of versification. Thus the *Romaunt of the Rose* most suitably opens his literary life—a translation in which there is nothing original except an occasional turn of phrase, but in which the translator finds opportunity for exercising his powers of judgment by virtually re-editing the work before him. And already in the *Book of the Duchess*, though most unmistakably a follower of Machault, he is also the rival of the great French *trouvère*, and has advanced in freedom of movement not less than in agreeableness of form. Then, as his travels extended his acquaintance with foreign literatures to that of Italy, he here found abundant fresh materials from which to feed his productive powers, and more elaborate forms in which to clothe their results; while at the same time comparison, the kindly nurse of originality, more and more enabled him to recast instead of imitating, or encouraged him freely to invent. In *Troilus and Cressid* he produced something very different from a mere condensed translation, and achieved a work in which he showed himself a master of poetic expression and sustained narrative; in the *House of Fame* and the *Assembly of Fowls* he moved with freedom in happily contrived allegories of his own invention; and with the *Legend of Good Women* he had already arrived at a stage when he could undertake to review, under a pleasant pretext, but with evident consciousness of work done, the list of his previous works. "He hath," he said to himself, "made many a lay and many a thing." Meanwhile the labor incidentally devoted by him to translation from the Latin, or to the composition of prose treatises in the scholastic manner of academical exercises, could but little affect his general literary progress. The mere scholarship of youth, even if it be the reverse of close and profound, is wont to cling to a man through life, and to assert its modest claims at any season; and thus Chaucer's school-learning exercised little influence either of an advancing or of a retarding kind upon the full development of his genius. Nowhere is he so truly himself as in the masterpiece of his last years. For the *Canterbury Tales*, in which he is at once greatest, most original, and most catholic in the choice of materials as well as in moral sympathies, bears the unmistakable stamp of having formed the crowning labor of his life—a work which death alone prevented him from completing.

It may be said, without presumption, that such a general view as this leaves ample room for all reasonable theories as to the chronology and sequence, where these remain more or less unsettled, of Chaucer's indisputably genuine works. In any case, there is no poet whom, if only as an exercise in critical analysis, it is more interesting to study and re-study in connection with the circumstances of his literary progress. He still, as has been seen, belongs to the Middle Ages, but to a period in which the noblest ideals of these Middle Ages are already beginning to pale and their mightiest institutions to quake around him; in which learning continues to be in the main scholasticism, the linking of argument with argument, and the accumulation of authority upon authority, and poetry remains to a great extent the crabbedness of clerks or the formality of courts. Again, Chaucer is mediæval in tricks of style and turns of phrase; he often contents himself with the tritest of figures and the most unrefreshing of ancient devices, and freely resorts to a mixture of names and associations belonging to his own times with others derived from other ages. This want of literary perspective is a sure sign of mediævalism, and one which has amused the world, or has jarred upon it, since the Renascence taught men to study both classical and Biblical antiquity as realities, and not merely as a succession of pictures or of tapestries on a wall. Chaucer mingles things mediæval and things classical as freely as he brackets King David with the philosopher Seneca, or Judas Iscariot with the Greek "dissimulator" Sinon. His Dido, mounted on a stout palfrey paper-white of hue, with a red-and-gold saddle embroidered and embossed, resembles Alice Perrers in all her pomp rather than the Virgilian queen. Jupiter's eagle, the poet's guide and instructor in the allegory of the *House of Fame*, invokes "Saint Mary, Saint James," and "Saint Clare" all at once; and the pair of lovers at Troy sign their letters "*la vostre T.*" and "*la vostre C.*" Anachronisms of this kind (of the danger of which, by the way, to judge from a passage in the *Prologue* of the *Legend of Good Women* Chaucer would not appear to have been wholly unconscious) are intrinsically of very slight importance. But the morality of Chaucer's narratives is at times the artificial and overstrained morality of the Middle Ages, which, as it were, clutches hold of a single idea to the exclusion of all others—a morality which, when carried to its extreme consequences, makes monomaniacs as well as martyrs, in both of which species, occasionally, perhaps, combined in the same persons, the Middle Ages abound. The fidelity of Griseldis under the trials imposed upon her by her, in point of fact, brutal husband is the fidelity of a martyr to unreason. The story was afterwards put on the stage in the Elizabethan age; and though even in the play of *Patient Grissil* (by Chettle and others) it is not easy to reconcile the husband's proceedings with the promptings of common sense, yet the playwrights, with the instinct of their craft, contrived to introduce some element of humanity into his character, and of probability into his conduct. Again, the supra-chivalrous respect paid by Arviragus, the Breton knight of the *Franklin's Tale*, to the sanctity of his wife's word, seriously to the peril of his own and his wife's honor, is an effort to which probably even the Knight of La Mancha himself would have proved unequal. It is not to be expected that Chaucer should have failed to share some of the prejudices of his times as well as to fall in with their ways of thought and sentiment; and though it is the *Prioress* who tells a story against the Jews which passes the legend of Hugh of Lincoln, yet it would be very hazardous to seek any irony in this legend of bigotry. In general, much of that *naïveté* which to modern readers seems Chaucer's most obvious literary quality must be ascribed to the times in which he lived and wrote. This quality is, in truth, by no means that which most deeply impresses itself upon the observation of any one able to compare Chaucer's writings with those of his more immediate predecessors and successors. But the sense in which the term *naïf* should be understood in literary criticism is so imperfectly agreed upon among us, that we have not yet even found an English equivalent for the word.

To Chaucer's times, then, belongs much of what may at first sight seem to include itself among the characteristics of his genius; while, on the other hand, there are to be distinguished from these the influences due to his training and studies in two literatures—the French and the Italian. In the former of these he must have felt at home, if not by birth and descent, at all events by social connection, habits of life, and ways of thought; while in the latter he, whose own country's was still a half-fledged literary life, found ready to his hand masterpieces of artistic maturity lofty in conception, broad in bearing, finished in form. There still remain, for summary review, the elements proper to his own poetic individuality—those which mark him out not only as the first great poet of his own nation, but as a great poet for all times.

The poet must please; if he wishes to be successful and popular, he must suit himself to the tastes of his public; and even if he be indifferent to immediate fame, he must, as belonging to one of the most impressionable, the most receptive species of humankind, live, in a sense, *with* and *for* his generation. To meet this demand upon his genius, Chaucer was born with many gifts which he carefully and assiduously exercised in a long series of poetical experiments, and which he was able felicitously to combine for the achievement of results unprecedented in our literature. In readiness of descriptive power, in brightness and variety of imagery, and in flow of diction, Chaucer remained unequalled by any English poet, till he was surpassed—it seems not too much to say, in all three respects—by Spenser. His verse, where it suits his purpose, glitters, to use Dunbar's expression, as with fresh enamel, and its hues are variegated like those of a French tapestry. Even where his descriptive enumerations seem at first sight monotonous or perfunctory, they are, in truth, graphic and true in their details, as in the list of birds in the *Assembly of Fowls*, quoted in part on an earlier page of this essay, and in the shorter list of trees in the same poem, which is, however, in its general features, imitated from Boccaccio. Neither King James I. of Scotland, nor Spenser, who after Chaucer essayed similar *tours de force*, were happier than he had been before them. Or we may refer to the description of the preparations for the tournament and of the tournament itself in the *Knight's Tale*, or to the thoroughly Dutch picture of a disturbance in a farm-yard in the *Nun's Priest's*. The vividness with which Chaucer describes scenes and events as if he had them before his own eyes, was no doubt, in the first instance, a result of his own imaginative temperament; but one would probably not go wrong in attributing the fulness of the use which he made of this gift to the influence of his Italian studies—more especially to those which led him to Dante, whose multitudinous characters and scenes impress themselves with so singular and immediate a definiteness upon the imagination. At the same time, Chaucer's resources seem inexhaustible for filling up or rounding off his narratives with the aid of chivalrous love or religious legend, by the introduction of samples of scholastic discourse or devices of personal or general allegory. He commands, where necessary, a rhetorician's readiness of illustration, and a masque-writer's inventiveness, as to machinery; he can even (in the *House of Fame*) conjure up an elaborate but self-consistent phantasmagory of his own, and continue it with a fulness proving that his fancy would not be at a loss for supplying even more materials than he cares to employ.

But Chaucer's poetry derived its power to please from yet another quality; and in this he was the first of our English poets to emulate the poets of the two literatures to which, in the matter of his productions and in the ornaments of his diction, he owed so much. There is in his verse a music which hardly ever wholly loses itself, and which at times is as sweet as that in any English poet after him.

This assertion is not one which is likely to be gainsaid at the present day, when there is not a single lover of Chaucer who would sit down contented with Dryden's condescending mixture of censure and praise. "The verse of Chaucer," he wrote, "I confess, is not harmonious to us. They who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical; and it continues so, even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lydgate and Gower, his contemporaries: there is a rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect." At the same time, it is no doubt necessary, in order to verify the correctness of a less balanced judgment, to take the trouble, which, if it could but be believed, is by no means great, to master the rules and usages of Chaucerian versification. These rules and usages the present is not a fit occasion for seeking to explain.*

With regard to the most important of them, it is not too much to say that instinct and experience will very speedily combine to indicate to an intelligent reader where the poet has resorted to it. *Without* intelligence on the part of the reader, the beautiful harmonies of Mr. Tennyson's later verse remain obscure; so that, taken in this way, the most musical of English verse may seem as difficult to read as the most rugged; but in the former case the lesson is learnt not to be lost again; in the latter, the tumbling is ever beginning anew, as with the rock of Sisyphus. There is nothing that can fairly be called rugged in the verse of Chaucer.

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* It may, however, be stated that they only partially connect themselves with Chaucer's use of forms which are now obsolete—more especially of inflections of verbs and substantives (including several instances of the famous final *e*) and contractions with the negative *ne* and other monosyllabic words ending in a vowel, of the initial syllables of words beginning with vowels or with the letter *h*. These and other variations from latter usage in spelling and pronunciation—such as the occurrence of an *e* (sometimes sounded and sometimes not) at the end of words in which it is now no longer retained, and, again, the frequent accentuation of many words of French origin in thir last syllable, as in French, and of certain words of English origin analogously—are to be looked for as a matter of course in a last writing in the period of our language in which Chaucer lived. He clearly foresaw

And, fortunately, there are not many pages in this poet's works devoid of lines or passages the music of which cannot escape any ear,

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the difficulties which would be caused to his readers by the variations of usage in spelling and pronunciation—variations to some extent rendered inevitable by the fact that he wrote in an English dialect which was only gradually coming to be accepted as the uniform language of English writers. Towards the close of his *Troilus and Cressid* he thus addresses his "little book," in fear of the mangling it might undergo from scriveners who might blunder in the copying of its words, or from reciters who might maltreat its verse in the distribution of the accents:—

> "And, since there is so great diversity
> In English, and in writing of our tongue,
> I pray to God that none may míswrite thee
> Nor the mismetre, for default of tongue,
> And wheresoe'er thou mayst be read or sung,
> That thou be understood, God I beseech."

But in his versification he likewise adopted certain other practices which had no such origin or reason as those already referred to. Among them were the addition, at the end of a line of five accents, of an unaccented syllable; and the substitution, for the first foot of a line either of four of five accents, of a single syllable. These deviations from a stricter system of versification he doubtless permitted to himself, partly for the sake of variety, and partly for that of convenience; but neither of them is peculiar to himself, or of supreme importance for the effect of his verse. In fact, he seems to allow as much in a passage of his *House of Fame*—a poem written, it should, however, be observed, in an easy-going form of verse (the line of four accents) which in his later period Chaucer seems, with this exception, to have invariably discarded. He here beseeches Apollo to make his rhyme

> ". . . Somewhat agreeáble,
> Though some verse fail in a sylláble."

But another of his usages—the misunderstanding of which has more than anything else caused his art as a writer of verse to be misjudged—seems to have been due to a very different cause. To understand the real nature of the usage in question it is only necessary to seize the principle of Chaucer's rhythm. Of this principle it was well said many years ago by a most competent authority—Mr. R. Horne—that it is "inseparable from a full or fair exercise of the genius of our language in versification." For though this usage in its full freedom was gradually again lost to our poetry for a time, yet it was in a large measure recovered by Shakspeare and the later dramatists of our great age, and has since been never altogether abandoned again—not even by the correct writers of the Augustan period—till by the favorites of our own times it is resorted to with a perhaps excessive liberality. It consists simply in *slurring* over certain final syllables—not eliding them or contracting them with the syllables following upon them, but passing over them lightly, so that, without being inaudible, they may at the same time not interfere with the rhythm or beat of the verse. This usage, by adding to the variety, incontestably adds to the flexibility and beauty of Chaucer's versification.

however unaccustomed it may be to his diction and versification. What is the nature of the art at whose bidding ten monosyllables arrange themselves into a line of the exquisite cadence of the following:—

"And she was fair, as is the rose in May?"

Nor would it be easy to find lines surpassing in their melancholy charm Chaucer's version of the lament of Medea when deserted by Jason—a passage which makes the reader neglectful of the English poet's modest hint that the letter of the Colchian princess may be found at full length in Ovid. The lines shall be quoted *verbatim*, though not *literatim*; and perhaps no better example, and none more readily appreciable by a modern ear, could be given than the fourth of them of the harmonious effect of Chaucer's usage of *slurring*, referred to above:—

"Why likèd thee my yellow hair to see
More than the boundës of mine honesty?
Why likèd me thy youth and thy fairnéss
And of thy tongue the infinite graciousness?
O, had'st thou in thy conquest dead y-bee(n),
Full myckle untruth had there died with thee."

Qualities and powers such as the above have belonged to poets of very various times and countries before and after Chaucer. But in addition to these he most assuredly possessed others, which are not usual among the poets of our nation, and which, whencesoever they had come to him personally, had not, before they made their appearance in him, seemed indigenous to the English soil. It would, indeed, be easy to misrepresent the history of English poetry, during the period which Chaucer's advent may be said to have closed, by ascribing to it a uniformly solemn and serious, or even dark and gloomy, character. Such a description would not apply to the poetry of the period before the Norman Conquest, though, in truth, little room could be left for the play of fancy or wit in the hammered-out war-song, or in the long-drawn Scriptural paraphrase. Nor was it likely that a contagious gayety should find an opportunity of manifesting itself in the course of the versification of grave historical chronicles, or in the tranquil objective reproduction of the endless traditions of British legend. Of the popular songs belonging to the period after the Norman Conquest, the remains which furnish us with direct or indirect evidence concerning them hardly enable us to form an opinion. But we know that (the cavilling spirit of Chaucer's burlesque *Rhyme of Sir Thopas* notwithstanding) the efforts of English metrical romance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were neither few nor feeble, although these romances were chiefly translations, sometimes abridgments to boot—even the Arthurian cycle having been only imported across the Channel, though it may have thus come back to its original home. There is some animation in at least one famous chronicle in verse, dating from about the close of the thirteenth century; there is real spirit in the war-songs of Minot in the middle of the fourteenth; and from about its beginnings dates a satire full of broad fun concerning the jolly life led by the monks. But none of these works or of those contemporary with them show that innate lightness and buoyancy of tone which seems to add wings to the art of poetry. Nowhere had the English mind found so real an opportunity of poetic utterance in the days of Chaucer's own youth as in Langland's unique work, national in its allegorical form and in its alliterative metre; and nowhere had this utterance been more stern and severe.

No sooner, however, has Chaucer made his appearance as a poet, than he seems to show what mistress's badge he wears, which party of the two that have at most times divided among them a national literature and its representatives he intends to follow. The burden of his song is 'Si douce est la marguérite:" he has learnt the ways of French gallantry as if to the manner born, and thus becomes, as it were without hesitation or effort, the first English love-poet. Nor—though in the course of his career his range of themes, his command of materials, and his choice of forms are widely enlarged—is the gay banner under which he has ranged himself ever deserted by him. With the exception of the *House of Fame*, there is not one of his longer poems of which the passion of love, under one or another of its aspects, does not either constitute the main subject or (as in the *Canterbury Tales*) furnish the greater part of the contents. It is as a love-poet that Gower thinks of Chaucer when playing a tribute to him in his own verse; it is to the attacks made upon him in his character as a love-poet, and to his consciousness of what he has achieved as such, that he gives expression in the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*, where his fair advocate tells the God of Love:—

> "The man hath servèd you of his cunning,
> And furthered well your law in his writing,
> All be it that he cannot well indite,
> Yet hath he made unlearned folk delight
> To servë you in praising of your name."

And so he resumes his favorite theme once more, to tell, as the *Man of Law* says, "of lovers up and down, more than Ovid makes mention of in his old *Epistles*." This fact alone—that our first great English poet was also our first English love-poet, properly so called—would have sufficed to transform our poetic literature through his agency.

What, however, calls for special notice, in connection with Chaucer's special poetic quality of gayety and brightness, is the preference which he exhibits for treating the joyous aspects of this many-sided passion. Apart from the *Legend of Good Women*, which is specially designed to give brilliant examples of the faithfulness of women under circumstances of trial, pain, and grief, and from two or three of the

Canterbury Tales, he dwells, with consistent preference, on the bright side of love, though remaining a stranger to its divine radiance, which shines forth so fully upon us out of the pages of Spenser. Thus, in the *Assembly of Fowls* all is gayety and mirth, as indeed beseems the genial neighborhood of Cupid's temple. Again, in *Troilus and Cressid*, the earlier and cheerful part of the love-story is that which he develops with unmistakable sympathy and enjoyment; and in his hands this part of the poem becomes one of the most charming poetic narratives of the birth and growth of young love which our literature possesses—a soft and sweet counterpart to the consuming heat of Marlowe's unrivalled *Hero and Leander*. With Troilus it was love at first sight—with Cressid a passion of very gradual growth. But so full of nature is the narrative of this growth, that one is irresistibly reminded at more than one point of the inimitable creations of the great modern master in the description of women's love. Is there not a touch of Gretchen in Cressid, retiring into her chamber to ponder over the first revelation to her of the love of Troilus?—

"Cressid arose, no longer there she stayed,
But straight into her closet went anon,
And set her down, as still as any stone,
And every word gan up and down to wind,
That he had said, as it came to her mind."

And is there not a touch of Clärchen in her—though with a difference—when from her casement she blushingly beholds her lover riding past in triumph:

"So like a man of armës and a knight
He was to see, filled full of high prowéss,
For both he had a body, and a might
To do that thing, as well as hardiness;
And eke to see him in his gear him dress,
So fresh, so young, so wieldly seemèd he,
It truly was a heaven him for to see.

"His helm was hewn about in twenty places,
That by a tissue hung his back behind;
His shield was dashed with strokes of swords and maces,
In which men mightë many an arrow find
That piercèd had the horn and nerve and rind;
And aye the people cried: 'Here comes our joy,
And, next his brother, holder up of Troy.'"

Even in the very *Book of the Duchess*, the widowed lover describes the maiden charms of his lost wife with so lively a freshness as almost to make one forget that it is a *lost* wife whose praises are being recorded.

The vivacity and joyousness of Chaucer's poetic temperament, however, show themselves in various other ways besides his favorite manner of treating a favorite theme. They enhance the spirit of his passages of dialogue, and add force and freshness to his passages of description. They make him amusingly impatient of epical lengths, abrupt in his transitions, and anxious, with an anxiety usually manifested by readers rather than by writers, to come to the point, "to the great effect," as he is wont to call it. "Men," he says, "may overlade a ship or barge, and therefore I will skip at once to the effect, and let all the rest slip." And he unconsciously suggests a striking difference between himself and the great Elizabethan epic poet who owes so much to him, when he declines to make as long a tale of the chaff or of the straw as of the corn, and to describe all the details of a marriage-feast *seriatim:*

"The fruit of every tale is for to say:
They eat and drink, and dance and sing and play."

This may be the fruit; but epic poets, from Homer downwards, have been generally in the habit of not neglecting the foliage. Spenser, in particular, has that impartial copiousness which we think it our duty to admire in the Ionic epos, but which, if the truth were told, has prevented generations of Englishmen from acquiring an intimate personal acquaintance with the *Fairy Queen*. With Chaucer the danger certainly rather lay in an opposite direction. Most assuredly he can tell a story with admirable point and precision, when he wishes to do so. Perhaps no better example of his skill in this respect could be cited than the *Manciple's Tale*, with its rapid narrative, its major and minor catastrophe, and its concise moral, ending thus:—

"My son, beware, and be no author new
Of tidings, whether they be false or true;
Whereso thou comest, among high or low,
Keep well thy tongue, and think upon the crow."

At the same time, his frequently recurring announcements of his desire to be brief have the effect of making his narrative appear to halt, and thus, unfortunately, defeat their own purpose. An example of this may be found in the *Knight's Tale*, a narrative poem of which, in contract with its beauties, a want of evenness is one of the chief defects. It is not that the desire to suppress redundancies is a tendency deserving anything but commendation in any writer, whether great or small; but rather, that the art of concealing art had not yet dawned upon Chaucer. And yet few writers of any time have taken a more evident pleasure in the process of literary production, and have more visibly overflowed with sympathy for, or antipathy against, the characters of their own creation. Great novelists of our own age have often told their readers, in prefaces to their fictions or in *quasi*-confidential comments upon them, of the intimacy in which they have lived with the offspring of their own brain, to them far from shadowy beings. But only the *naïveté* of Chaucer's literary age, together with the vivacity of his manner of thought and writing, could place him in so close a personal relation towards the personages and the incidents of his poems. He is overcome by "pity and ruth" as he reads of suffering, and his eyes "wax foul and sore" as he prepares to tell of its infliction. He compassionates "love's servants" as if he were their own "brother dear;" and into his adaptation of the eventful story of Constance (the *Man of Law's Tale*) he introduces apostrophe upon apostrophe, to the defenceless condition of his heroine—to her relentless enemy the Sultana, and to Satan, who ever makes his instument of women "when he will beguile"—to the drunken messenger who allowed the letter carried by him to be stolen from him—and to the treacherous Queen-mother who caused them to be stolen. Indeed, in addressing the last-named personage, the poet seems to lose all control over himself.

> "O domegild, I have no English digne
> Unto thy malice and thy tyranny:
> And therefore to the fiend I thee resign,
> Let him at length tell of thy treachery.
> Fye, mannish, fye!—Oh nay, by God, I lie;
> Fye fiendish spirit, for I dare well tell,
> Though thou here walk, thy spirit is in hell."

At the opening of the *Legend of Ariadne* he bids Minos redden with shame; and towards its close, when narrating how Theseus sailed away, leaving his true-love behind, he expresses a hope that the wind may drive the traitor "a twenty devil way." Nor does this vivacity find a less amusing expression in so trifling a touch as that in the *Clerk's Tale*, where the domestic sent to deprive Griseldis of her boy becomes, *eo ipso* as it were, "this ugly sergeant."

Closely allied to Chaucer's liveliness and gayety of disposition, and in part springing from them, are his keen sense of the ridiculous and the power of satire which he has at his command. His humor has many varieties, ranging from the refined and half-melancholy irony of the *House of Fame* to the ready wit of the sagacious uncle of Cressid, the burlesque fun of the inimitable *Nun's Priest's Tale*, and the very gross salt of the *Reeve*, the *Miller*, and one or two others. The springs of humor often capriciously refuse to allow themselves to be discovered; nor is the satire of which the direct intention is transparent invariably the most effective species of satire. Concerning, however, Chaucer's use of the power which he in so large a measure possessed, viz., that of covering with ridicule the palpable vices or weaknesses of the classes or kinds of men represented by some of his character-types, one assertion may be made with tolerable safety. Whatever may have been the first stimulus and the ultimate scope of the wit and humor which he here expended, they are *not* to be explained as moral indignation in disguise. And in truth Chaucer's merriment flows spontaneously from a source very near the surface; he is so extremely diverting, because he is so extremely diverted himself.

Herein, too, lies the harmlessness of Chaucer's fun. Its harmlessness, to wit, for those who are able to read him in something like the spirit in which he wrote—never a very easy achievement with regard to any author, and one which the beginner and the young had better be advised to abstain from attempting with Chaucer in the overflow of his more or less unrestrained moods. At all events, the excuse of gayety of heart—the plea of that *vieil esprit Gaulois* which is so often, and very rarely without need, invoked in an exculpatory capacity by modern French criticism—is the best defence ever made for Chaucer's laughable irregularities, either by his apologists or by himself. "Men should not," he says, and says very truly, "make earnest of game." But when he audaciously defends himself against the charge of impropriety by declaring that he must tell stories in *character*, and coolly requests any person who may find anything in one of his tales objectionable to turn to another :—

> "For he shall find enough, both great and small,
> Of storial thing that toucheth gentleness,
> Likewise morality and holiness;
> Blame ye not me, if ye should choose amiss—"

we are constrained to shake our heads at the transparent sophistry of the plea, which requires no exposure. For Chaucer knew very well how to give life and color to his page without recklessly disregarding bounds the neglect of which was even in his day offensive to many besides the "*precious* folk" of whom he half derisively pretends to stand in awe. In one instance he defeated his own purpose; for the so-called *Cook's Tale of Gamelyn* was substituted by some earlier editor for the original *Cook's Tale*, which has thus in its completed form become a rarity removed beyond the reach of even the most ardent of curiosity hunters. Fortunately, however, Chaucer spoke the truth when he said that from this point of view he had written very differently at different times; no whiter pages remain than many of his.

But the realism of Chaucer is something more than exuberant love of fun and light-hearted gayety. He is the first great painter of character, because he is the first great observer of it among modern European writers. His power of comic observation need not be dwelt upon again, after the illustrations of it which have been incidentally furnished in these pages. More especially with regard to the manners and ways of women, which often, while seeming so natural to women themselves, appear so odd to male observers, Chaucer's eye was ever on the alert. But his works likewise contain passages displaying a penetrating insight into the minds of men, as well as a keen eye for their manners, together with a power of generalizing, which, when kept within due bounds, lies at the root of the wise knowledge of humankind so admirable to us in our great essayists, from Bacon to Addison and his modern successors. How truly, for instance, in *Troilus and Cressid*, Chaucer observes on the enthusiastic belief of converts, the "strongest-faithed" of men, as he understands! And how fine is the saying as to the suspiciousness characteristic of lewd (*i.e.*, ignorant) people, that to things which are made more subtly

> "Than they can in their lewdness comprehend,

they gladly give the worst interpretation which suggests itself! How appositely the *Canon's Yeoman* describes the arrogance of those who are too clever by half; "when a man has an over-great wit," he says, "it very often chances to him to misuse it!" And with how ripe a wisdom, combined with ethics of true gentleness, the honest *Franklin*, at the opening of his *Tale*, discourses on the uses and the beauty of long-suffering:—

> "For one thing, sirës, safely dare I say,
> That friends the one the other must obey,
> If they will longë holdë company.
> Love will not be constrain'd by mastery.
> When mastery comes, the god of love anon
> Beateth his wings—and, farewell! he is gone.
> Love is a thing as any spirit free.
> Women desire, by nature, liberty,
> And not to be constrained as a thrall;
> And so do men, if I the truth say shall.
> Look, who that is most patiént in love,
> He is at his advantage all above.
> A virtue high is patiénce, certaín,
> Because it vanquisheth, as clerks explain,
> Things to which rigor never could attain.
> For every word men should not chide and plain;
> Learn ye to suffer, or else, so may I go,
> Ye shall it learn, whether ye will or no.
> For in this world certaín no wight there is
> Who neither doth nor saith some time amiss.
> Sickness or ire, or constellatión,
> Wine, woe, or changing of complexión,
> Causeth full oft to do amiss or speak.
> For every wrong men may not vengeance wreak:
> After a time there must be temperance
> With every wight that knows self-governance."

It was by virtue of his power of observing and drawing character, above all, that Chaucer became the true predecessor of two several growths of our literature, in both of which characterization forms a most important element—it might perhaps be truly said, the element which surpasses all others in importance. From this point of view the dramatic poets of the Elizabethan age remain unequalled by any other school or group of dramatists, and the English novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the representatives of any other development of prose-fiction. In the art of construction, in the invention and the arrangement of incident, these dramatists and novelists may have been left behind by others; in the creation of character they are, on the whole, without rivals in their respective branches of literature. To the earlier at least of these growths Chaucer may be said to have pointed the way. His personages—more especially, of course, as has been seen, those who are assembled together in the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*—are not mere phantasms of the brain, or even mere actual possibilities, but real human beings, and types true to the likeness of whole classes of men and women, or to the mould in which all human nature is cast. This is, upon the whole, the most wonderful, as it is perhaps the most generally recognized, of Chaucer's gifts. It would not of itself have sufficed to make him a great dramatist, had the drama stood ready for him as a literary form into which to pour the inspirations of his genius, as it afterwards stood ready for our great Elizabethans. But to it were added in him that perception of a strong dramatic situation, and that power of finding the right words for it, which have determined the success of many plays, and the absence of which materially detracts from the completeness of the effect of others, high as their merits may be in other respects. How thrilling, for instance, is that rapid passage across the stage, as one might almost call it, of the unhappy Dorigen in the *Franklin's Tale!* The antecedents of the situation, to be sure, are, as has been elsewhere suggested, absurd enough; but who can fail to feel that spasm of anxious sympathy with which a powerful dramatic situation in itself affects us, when the wife, whom for truth's sake her husband has bidden be untrue to him, goes forth on her unholy errand of duty? "'Whither so fast?" asks the lover:

> "And she made answer, half as she were mad:
> 'Unto the garden, as my husband bade,
> My promise for to keep, alas! alas!'"

Nor, as the abbreviated prose version of the *Pardoner's Tale* given above will suffice to show, was Chaucer deficient in the art of dramatically arranging a story; while he is not excelled by any of our non-dramatic poets in the spirit and movement of his dialogue. The *Book of the Duchess* and the *House of Fame*, but more especially *Troilus and Cressid* and the connecting passages between some of the *Canterbury Tales*, may be referred to in various illustration of this.

The vividness of his imagination, which conjures up, so to speak, the very personality of his characters before him, and the contagious force of his pathos, which is as true and as spontaneous as his humor, complete in him the born dramatist. We can see Constance as with our own eyes, in the agony of her peril:—

> "Have ye not seen some time a pallid face
> Among a press, of him that hath been led
> Towards his death, where him awaits no grace,
> And such a color in his face hath had,
> Men mightë know his face was so bested
> 'Mong all the other faces in that rout?
> So stands Constánce, and looketh her about."

And perhaps there is no better way of studying the general character of Chaucer's pathos than a comparison of the *Monk's Tale* from which this passage is taken, and the *Clerk's Tale*, with their originals. In the former, for instance, the prayer of Constance, when condemned through Domegild's guilt to be cast adrift once more on the waters, her piteous words and tenderness to her little child as it lies weeping in her arm, and her touching leave-taking from the land of the husband who has condemned her—all these are Chaucer's own. So also are parts of one of the most affecting passages in the *Clerk's Tale*—Griseldis' farewell to her daughter. But it is as unnecessary to lay a finger upon lines and passages illustrating Chaucer's pathos as upon others illustrating his humor.

Thus, then, Chaucer was a born dramatist; but fate willed it, that the branch of our literature which might probably have of all been the best suited to his genius was not to spring into life till he and several generations after him had passed away. To be sure, during the fourteenth century the so-called miracle-plays flourished abundantly in England, and were, as there is every reason to believe, already largely performed by the trading-companies of London and the towns. The allusions in Chaucer to these beginnings of our English drama are, however, remarkably scanty The *Wife of Bath* mentions plays of miracles among the other occasions of religious sensation haunted by her, clad in her gay scarlet gown—including vigils, processions, preachings, pilgrimages, and marriages. And the jolly parish-clerk of the *Miller's Tale*, we are informed, at times, in order to show his lightness and his skill, played "Herod on a scaffold high"—thus, by-the-bye, emulating the parish clerks of London, who are known to have been among the performers of miracles in the Middle Ages. The allusion to Pilate's voice in the *Miller's Prologue*, and that in the *Tale* to

> "The sorrow of Noah with his fellowship
> That he had ere he got his wife to ship,"

seem likewise dramatic reminiscences; and the occurrence of these three allusions in a single *Tale* and its *Prologue* would incline one to think that Chaucer had recently amused himself at one of these performances. But plays are not mentioned among the entertainments enumerated at the opening of the *Pardoner's Tale*; and it would in any case have been unlikely that Chaucer should have paid much attention to diversions which were long chiefly "visited" by the classes with which he could have no personal connection, and even at a much later date were dissociated in men's minds from poetry and literature. Had he ever written anything remotely partaking of the nature of a dramatic piece, it could at the most have been the words of the songs in some congratulatory royal pageant such as Lydgate probably wrote on the return of Henry V. after Agincourt; though there is not the least reason for supposing Chaucer to have taken so much interest in the "ridings" through the City which occupied many a morning of the idle apprentice of the *Cook's Tale*, Perkyn Revellour. It is, perhaps, more surprising to find Chaucer, who was a reader of several Latin poets, and who had heard of more, both Latin and Greek, show no knowledge whatever of the ancient classical drama, with which he may accordingly be fairly concluded to have been wholly unacquainted.

To one further aspect of Chaucer's realism as a poet reference has already been made; but a final mention of it may most appropriately conclude this sketch of his poetical characteristics. His descriptions of nature are as true as his sketches of human character; and incidental touches in him reveal his love of the one as unmistakably as his unflagging interest in the study of the other. Even these May-morning *exordia*, in which he was but following a fashion—faithfully observed both by the French *trouvères* and by the English romances translated from their productions, and not forgotten by the author of the earlier part of the *Roman de la Rose*—always come from his hands with the freshness of natural truth. They cannot be called original in conception, and it would be difficult to point out in them anything strikingly original in execution; yet they cannot be included among those matter-of-course notices of morning and evening, sunrise and sunset, to which so many poets have accustomed us since (be it said with reverence) Homer himself. In Chaucer these passages make his page "as fresh as in the month of May." When he went forth on these April and May mornings, it was not solely with the intent of composing a roundelay or a *marguérite;* but we may be well assured he allowed the song of the little birds, the perfume of the flowers, and the fresh verdure of the English landscape, to sink into his very soul. For nowhere does he seem, and nowhere could he have been, more open to the influence which he received into himself, and which in his turn he exercised, and exercises upon others, than when he was in fresh contact with nature. In this influence lies the secret of his genius; in his poetry there is *life.*

CHAPTER IV.

EPILOGUE.

THE legacy which Chaucer left to our literature was to fructify in the hands of a long succession of heirs; and it may be said, with little fear of contradiction, that at no time has his fame been fresher and his influence upon our poets—and upon our painters as well as our poets—more perceptible than at the present day. When Gower first put forth his *Confessio Amantis*, we may assume that Chaucer's poetical labors, of the fame of which his brother-poet declared the land to be full, had not yet been crowned by his last and greatest work. As a poet, therefore, Gower in one sense owes less to Chaucer than did many of their successors; though, on the other hand, it may be said with truth that to Chaucer is due the fact that Gower (whose earlier productions were in French and in Latin) ever became a poet at all. The *Confessio Amantis* is no book for all times like the *Canterbury Tales;* but the conjoined names of Chaucer and Gower added strength to one another in the eyes of the generations ensuing, little anxious as these generations were to distinguish which of the pair was really the first to "garnish our English rude" with the flowers of a new poetic diction and art of verse.

The Lancaster period of our history had its days of national glory as well as of national humiliation, and indisputably, as a whole, advanced the growth of the nation towards political manhood. But it brought with it no golden summer to fulfil the promises of the springtide of our modern poetical literature. The two poets whose names stand forth from the barren after-season of the earlier half of the fifteenth century, were, both of them, according to their own profession, disciples of Chaucer. In truth, however, Occleve, the only name-worthy poetical writer of the reign of Henry IV., seems to have been less akin as an author to Chaucer than to Gower, while his principal poem manifestly was, in an even greater degree than the *Confessio Amantis*, a severely learned or, as its author terms it, unbuxom book. Lydgate, on the other hand, the famous monk of Bury, has in him something of the spirit as well as of the manner of Chaucer, under whose advice he is said to have composed one of his principal poems. Though a monk, he was no stay-at-home or do-nothing; like him of the *Canterbury Tales*, we may suppose Lydgate to have scorned the maxim that a monk out of his cloister is like a fish out of water; and doubtless many days which he could spare from the instruction of youth at St. Edmund's Bury were spent about the London streets, of the sights and sounds of which he has left us so vivacious a record—a kind of farcical supplement to the *Prologue* of the *Canterbury Tales.* His literary career, part of which certainly belongs to the reign of Henry V., has some resemblance to Chaucer's, though it is less regular and less consistent with itself; and several of his poems bear more or less distinct traces of Chaucer's influence. The *Troy-book* is not founded on *Troilus and Cressid*, though it is derived from the sources which had fed the original of Chaucer's poem; but the *Temple of Glass* seems to have been an imitation of the *House of Fame;* and the *Story of Thebes* is actually introduced by its author as an additional *Canterbury Tale*, and challenges comparison with the rest of the series into which it asks admittance. Both Occleve and Lydgate enjoyed the patronage of a prince of genius descended from the House, with whose founder Chaucer was so closely connected—Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. Meanwhile, the sovereign of a neighboring kingdom was in all probability himself the agent who established the influence of Chaucer as predominant in the literature of his native land. The long though honorable captivity in England of King James I. of Scotland—the best poet among kings and the best king among poets, as he has been antithetically called—was consoled by the study of the "hymns" of his "dear masters, Chaucer and Gower," for the happiness of whose souls he prays at the close of his poem, *The King's Quair.* That most charming of love-allegories, in which the Scottish king sings the story of his captivity and of his deliverance by the sweet messenger of love, not only closely imitates Chaucer in detail, more especially at his opening, but is pervaded by his spirit. Many subsequent Scottish poets imitated Chaucer, and some of them loyally acknowledged their debts to him. Gawin Douglas in his *Palace of Honor*, and Henryson in his *Testament of Cressid* and elsewhere, are followers of the Southern master. The wise and brave Sir David Lyndsay was familiar with his writings; and he was not only occasionally imitated, but praised with enthusiastic eloquence by William Dunbar, "that darling of the Scottish Muses," whose poetical merits Sir Walter Scott, from some points of view, can hardly be said to have exaggerated, when declaring him to have been "justly raised to a level with Chaucer by every judge of poetry, to whom his obsolete language has not rendered him unintelligible." Dunbar knew that this Scottish language was but a form of that which, as he declared, Chaucer had made to "surmount every terrestrial tongue, as far as midnight is surmounted by a May morning."

Meanwhile, in England, the influence of Chaucer continued to live even during the dreary interval which separates from one another two important epochs of our literary history. Now, as in the days of the Norman kings, ballads orally transmitted were the people's poetry; and one of these popular ballads carried the story of *Patient Grissel* into regions where Chaucer's name was probably unknown. When, after the close of the troubled season of the Roses, our poetic literature showed the first signs of a revival, they consisted in a return to the old masters of the fourteenth century. The poetry of Hawes, the learned author of the crabbed *Pastime of Pleasure*, exhibits an undeniable continuity with that of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, to which triad he devotes a chapter of panegyric. Hawes, however, presses into the service of his allegory not only all the Virtues and all the Vices, whom from habit we can tolerate in such productions, but also Astronomy, Geometry, Arithmetic, and the rest of the seven Daughters of Doctrine, whom we *cannot*, and is altogether inferior to the least of his models. It is, at the same time, to his credit that he seems painfully aware of his inability to cope with either Chaucer or Lydgate as to vigor of invention. There is, in truth, more of the dramatic spirit of Chaucer in Barklay's *Ship of Fools*, which, though essentially a translation, achieved in England the popularity of an original work; for this poem, like the *Canterbury Tales*, introduces into its admirable framework a variety of lifelike sketches of character and manners—it has in it that dramatic element which is so Chaucerian a characteristic. But the aim of its author was didactic, which Chaucer had never been.

When with the poems of Surrey and Wyatt, and with the first attempts in the direction of the regular drama, the opening of the second great age in our literature approached, and when, about half a century afterwards, that age actually opened with an unequalled burst of varied productivity, it would seem as if Chaucer's influence might naturally enough have passed away, or at least become obscured. Such was not, however, the case, and Chaucer survived into the age of the English Renascence as an established English classic, in which capacity Caxton had honored him by twice issuing an edition of his works from the Westminster printing-press. Henry VIII.'s favorite—the reckless but pithy satirist, Skelton—was alive to the merits of his great predecessor; and Skelton's patron, William Thynne, a royal official, busied himself with editing Chaucer's works. The loyal servant of Queen Mary, the wise and witty John Heywood, from whose *Interludes* the step is so short to the first regular English comedy, in one of these pieces freely plagiarized a passage in the *Canterbury Tales.* Tottel, the printer of the favorite poetic *Miscellany* published shortly before Queen Elizabeth's accession, included in his collection the beautiful lines, cited above, called *Good Counsel of Chaucer.* And when at last the Elizabethan era properly so-called began, the proof was speedily given that geniuses worthy of holding fellowship with Chaucer had assimilated into their own literary growth what was congruous to it in his, just as he had assimilated to himself—not always improving, but hardly ever merely borrowing or taking over—much that he had found in the French *trouvères*, and in Italian poetry and prose. The first work which can be included in the great period of Elizabethan literature is the *Shepherd's Calendar*, where Spenser is still in a partly imitative stage; and it is Chaucer whom he imitates and extols in his poem, and whom his *alter ego*, the mysterious "*E. K.*," extols in preface and notes. The longest of the passages in which reference is made by Spenser to Chaucer, under the pseudonym of Tityrus, is more especially noteworthy, both as showing the veneration of the younger for the older poet, and as testifying to the growing popularity of Chaucer at the time when Spenser wrote.

The same great poet's debt to his revered predecessor in the *Daphnaïda* has been already mentioned. The *Fairy Queen* is the masterpiece of an original mind, and its supreme poetic quality is a lofty magnificence upon the whole foreign to Chaucer's genius; but Spenser owed something more than his archaic forms to "Tityrus," with whose style he had erst disclaimed all ambition to match his pastoral pipe. In a well-known passage of his great epos he declares that it is through sweet infusion of the older poet's own spirit that he, the younger, follows the footing of his feet, in order so the rather to meet with his meaning. It was this, the romantic spirit proper, which Spenser sought to catch from Chaucer, but which, like all those who consciously seek after it, he transmuted into a new quality and a new power. With Spenser the change was into something mightier and loftier. He would, we cannot doubt, readily have echoed the judgment of his friend and brother-poet concerning Chaucer. "I know not," writes Sir Philip Sidney, "whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we, in this clear age, walk so stumblingly after him. Yet had he," adds Sidney, with the generosity of a true critic, who is not lost in wonder at his own cleverness in discovering defects, "great wants, fit to be forgiven in so reverent an antiquity." And yet a third Elizabethan, Michael Drayton, pure of tone and high of purpose, joins his voice to those of Spenser and Sidney, hailing in the "noble Chaucer"

> ". . . The first of those that ever brake
> Into the Muses' treasure and first spake
> In weighty numbers,"

and placing Gower, with a degree of judgment not reached by his and Chaucer's immediate successors, in his proper relation of poetic rank to his younger but greater contemporary.

To these names should be added that of George Puttenham—if he was indeed the author of the grave and elaborate treatise, dedicated to Lord Burghley, on *The Art of English Poësy*. In this work mention is repeatedly made of Chaucer, "father of our English poets;" and his learning, and "the natural of his pleasant wit," are alike judiciously commended. One of Puttenham's best qualities as a critic is that he never speaks without his book; and he comes very near to discovering Chaucer's greatest gift when noticing his excellence in *prosopographia*—a term which to Chaucer would, perhaps, have seemed to require translation. At the obsoleteness of Chaucer's own diction this critic, who writes entirely "for the better brought-up sort," is obliged to shake his learned head.

Enough has been said in the preceding pages to support the opinion that among the wants which fell to the lot of Chaucer as a poet, perhaps the greatest (though Sidney would never have allowed this) was the want of poetic form most in harmony with his most characteristic gifts. The influence of Chaucer upon the dramatists of the Elizabethan age was probably rather indirect and general than direct and personal; but indications or illustrations of it may be traced in a considerable number of these writers, including, perhaps, among the earliest Richard Edwards as the author of a non-extant tragedy, *Palamon and Arcite*, and among the latest the author—or authors—of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Besides Fletcher and Shakspeare, Greene, Nash, and Middleton, and more especially Jonson (as both poet and grammarian), were acquainted with Chaucer's writings; so that it is perhaps rather a proof of the widespread popularity of the *Canterbury Tales* than the reverse that they were not largely resorted to for materials by the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. Under Charles I. *Troilus and Cressid* found a translator in Sir Francis Kynaston, whom Cartwright congratulated on having made it possible "that we read Chaucer now without a dictionary." A personage, however, in Cartwright's best known play, the Antiquary Moth, prefers to talk on his own account "genuine" Chaucerian English.

To pursue the further traces of the influence of Chaucer through such a literary aftergrowth as the younger Fletchers, into the early poems of Milton, would be beyond the purpose of the present essay. In the treasure-house of that great poet's mind were gathered memories and associations innumerable, though the sublimest flights of his genius soared aloft into regions whither the imagination of none of our earlier poets had preceded them. On the other hand, the days have passed for attention to be spared for the treatment experienced by Chaucer in the Augustan age, to which he was a barbarian only to be tolerated if put into the court-dress of the final period of civilization. Still, even thus, he was not left altogether unread; nor was he in all cases adapted without a certain measure of success. The irrepressible vigor, and the frequent felicity, of Dryden's *Fables* contrast advantageously with the tame evenness of the *Temple of Fame*, an early effort by Pope, who had wit enough to imitate in a juvenile parody some of the grossest peculiarities of Chaucer's manner, but who would have been quite ashamed to reproduce him in a serious literary performance, without the inevitable polish and cadence of his own style of verse. Later modernizations—even of those which a band of poets in some instances singularly qualified for the task put forth in a collection published in the year 1841, and which, on the part of some of them at least, was the result of conscientious endeavor—it is needless to characterize here. Slight incidental use has been made of some of these in this essay, the author of which would gladly have abstained from printing a single modernized phrase or word—most of all, any which he has himself been guilty of re-casting. The time cannot be far distant when even the least unsuccessful of such attempts will no longer be accepted, because no such attempts whatever will be any longer required. No Englishman or Englishwoman need go through a very long or very laborious apprenticeship in order to become able to read, understand, and enjoy what Chaucer himself wrote. But if this apprenticeship be too hard, then some sort of makeshift must be accepted, or antiquity must remain the "canker-worm" even of a great national poet, as Spenser said it had already in his day proved to be of Chaucer.

Meanwhile, since our poetic literature has long thrown off the shackles which forced it to adhere to one particular group of models, he is not a true English poet who should remain uninfluenced by any of the really great among his predecessors. If Chaucer has again, in a special sense, become the "master dear and father reverent" of some of our living poets, in a wider sense he must hold this relation to them all and to all their successors, so long as he continues to be known and understood. As it is, there are few worthies of our literature whose names seem to awaken throughout the English-speaking world a readier sentiment of familiar regard; and in New England, where the earliest great poet of Old England is cherished not less warmly than among ourselves, a kindly cunning has thus limned his likeness:—

> "An old man in a lodge within a park;
> The chamber walls depicted all around
> With portraiture of huntsman, hawk and hound,
> And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,
> Whose song comes with the sunshine through the dark
> Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;
> He listeneth and he laugheth at the sound,
> Then writeth in a book like any clerk.
> He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote
> The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
> Made beautiful with song; and as I read
> I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note
> Of lark and linnet, and from every page
> Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead."

GLOSSARY.

Bencite = benedicite.
Clepe, call.
Dean, judge.
Despitous, angry to excess.
Digne, fit;—disdainful.
Frere, friar.
Gentle, well-born.
Keep, care.
Languor, grief.
Meinie, following, household.
Meet, mate (?), measure (?).
Overthwart, across.
Parage, rank, degree.
Press, crowd.
Rede, advise, counsel.
Reeve, steward, bailiff.
Ruth, pity.
Scall, scab.
Shapely, fit.
Sithe, time.
Spiced, nice, scrupulous.
Targe, target, shield.
Y prefix of past participle as in *y-bee* = *bee(n)*.
While, time; *to quite his while*, to reward his pains.
Wieldy, active.
Wone, custom, habit.

⁂ A dotted ë should always be sounded in reading.

SPENSER.

BY

R. W. CHURCH,

DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S.

SPENSER.

CHAPTER I.

SPENSER'S EARLY LIFE.

[1552–1579.]

SPENSER marks a beginning in English literature. He was the first Englishman who, in that great division of our history which dates from the Reformation, attempted and achieved a poetical work of the highest order. Born about the same time as Hooker (1552–1554), in the middle of that eventful century which began with Henry VIII., and ended with Elizabeth, he was the earliest of our great modern writers in poetry, as Hooker was the earliest of the great modern writers in prose. In that reviving English literature, which, after Chaucer's wonderful promise, had been arrested in its progress, first by the Wars of the Roses, and then by the religious troubles of the Reformation, these two were the writers who first realized to Englishmen the ideas of a high literary perfection. These ideas vaguely filled many minds; but no one had yet shown the genius and the strength to grasp and exhibit them in a way to challenge comparison with what had been accomplished by the poetry and prose of Greece, Rome, and Italy. There had been poets in England since Chaucer, and prose-writers since Wycliffe had translated the Bible. Surrey and Wyatt had deserved to live, while a crowd of poets, as ambitious as they, and not incapable of occasional force and sweetness, have been forgotten. Sir Thomas More, Roger Ascham, Tyndale, the translator of the New Testament, Bishop Latimer, the writers of many state documents, and the framers, either by translation or composition, of the offices of the English Prayer-Book, showed that they understood the power of the English language over many of the subtleties and difficulties of thought, and were alive to the music of its cadences. Some of these works, consecrated by the highest of all possible associations, have remained, permanent monuments and standards of the most majestic and most affecting English speech. But the verse of Surrey, Wyatt, and Sackville, and the prose of More and Ascham, were but noble and promising efforts. Perhaps the language was not ripe for their success ; perhaps the craftsmen's strength and experience were not equal to the novelty of their attempt. But no one can compare the English styles of the first half of the sixteenth century with the contemporary styles of Italy, with Ariosto, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, without feeling the immense gap in point of culture, practice, and skill—the immense distance at which the Italians were ahead, in the finish and reach of their instruments, in their power to handle them, in command over their resources, and facility and ease in using them. The Italians were more than a century older ; the English could not yet, like the Italians, say what they would ; the strength of English was, doubtless, there in germ, but it had still to reach its full growth and development. Even the French prose of Rabelais and Montaigne was more mature. But in Spenser, as in Hooker, all these tentative essays of vigorous but unpractised minds have led up to great and lasting works. We have forgotten all these preliminary attempts, crude and imperfect, to speak with force and truth, or to sing with measure and grace. There is no reason why they should be remembered, except by professed inquirers into the antiquities of our literature ; they were usually clumsy and awkward, sometimes grotesque, often affected, always hopelessly wanting in the finish, breadth, moderation, and order which alone can give permanence to writing. They were the necessary exercises by which Englishmen were recovering the suspended art of Chaucer, and learning to write ; and exercises, though indispensably necessary, are not ordinarily in themselves interesting and admirable. But when the exercises had been duly gone through, then arose the original and powerful minds, to take full advantage of what had been gained by all the practising, and to concentrate and bring to a focus all the hints and lessons of art which had been gradually accumulating. Then the sustained strength and richness of the *Faerie Queene* became possible ; contemporary with it, the grandeur and force of English prose began in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, and then, in the splendid Elizabethan Drama, that form of art which has nowhere a rival, the highest powers of poetic imagination became wedded, as they had never been before in England or in the world, to the real facts of human life, and to its deepest thoughts and passions.

More is known about the circumstances of Spenser's life than about the lives of many men of letters of that time ; yet our knowledge is often imperfect and inaccurate. The year 1552 is now generally accepted as the year of his birth. The date is inferred from a passage in one of his Sonnets,* and this probably is near the truth. That is

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*——" Since the winged god his planet clear
Began in me to move, one year is spent :
The which doth longer unto me appear
Than *all those forty* which my life outwent."
Sonnet LX., probably written in 1593 or 1594.

to say, that Spenser was born in one of the last two years of Edward VI.; that his infancy was passed during the dark days of Mary; and that he was about six years old when Elizabeth came to the throne. About the same time were born Ralegh, and, a year or two later (1554), Hooker and Philip Sidney. Bacon (1561), and Shakspeare (1564), belong to the next decade of the century.

He was certainly a Londoner by birth and early training. This also we learn from himself, in the latest poem published in his life-time. It is a bridal ode (*Prothalamion*), to celebrate the marriage of two daughters of the Earl of Worcester, written late in 1596. It was a time in his life of disappointment and trouble, when he was only a rare visitor to London. In the poem he imagines himself on the banks of London's great river, and the bridal procession arriving at Lord Essex's house; and he takes occasion to record the affection with which he still regarded "the most kindly nurse" of his boyhood.

"Calm was the day, and through the trembling air
Sweet-breathing Zephyrus did softly play,
A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay
Hot Titan's beams, which then did glister fair:
When I, (whom sullen care,
Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
In Princes Court, and expectation vain
Of idle hopes, which still do fly away,
Like empty shadows, did afflict my brain,)
Walkt forth to ease my pain
Along the shore of silver-streaming Thames;
Whose rutty bank, the which his river hems,
Was painted all with variable flowers,
And all the meads adorned with dainty gems
Fit to deck maidens' bowers,
And crown their paramours
Against the bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song.

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At length they all *to merry London came*,
To merry London, my most kindly nurse,
That to me gave this life's first native source,
Though from another place I take my name,
A house of ancient fame.
There, when they came, whereas those bricky towers
To which on Thames' broad aged back do ride,
Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers,
There whilome wont the Templar Knights to 'bide,
Till they decayed through pride:
Next whereunto there stands a stately place,
Where oft I gained gifts and goodly grace[*]
Of that great Lord, which therein wont to dwell;
Whose want too well now feels my friendless case;
But ah! here fits not well
Old woes, but joys, to tell
Against the bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song:

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[*] Leicester House, then Essex House, in the Strand.

Yet therein now doth lodge a noble peer,*
Great England's glory and the wide world's wonder,
Whose dreadful name late through all Spain did thunder,
And Hercules' two pillars, standing near,
Did make to quake and fear.
Fair branch of honor, flower of chivalry!
That fillest England with thy triumph's fame,
Joy have thou of thy noble victory,†
And endless happiness of thine own name
That promiseth the same.
That through thy prowess, and victorious arms,
Thy country may be freed from foreign harms;
And great Elisa's glorious name may ring
Though all the world, filled with thy wide alarms."

Who his father was, and what was his employment, we know not. From one of the poems of his later years we learn that his mother bore the famous name of Elizabeth, which was also the cherished one of Spenser's wife.

"My love, my life's best ornament,
By whom my spirit out of dust was raised." ‡

But his family, whatever was his father's condition, certainly claimed kindred, though there was a difference in the spelling of the name, with a house then rising into fame and importance, the Spencers of Althorpe, the ancestor of the Spencers and Churchills of modern days. Sir John Spencer had several daughters, three of whom made great marriages. Elizabeth was the wife of Sir George Carey, afterwards the second Lord Hunsdon, the son of Elizabeth's cousin and Counsellor. Anne, first, Lady Compton, afterwards married Thomas Sackville, the son of the poet, Lord Buckhurst, and then Earl of Dorset. Alice, the youngest, whose first husband, Lord Strange, became Earl of Derby, after his death married Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper, Baron Ellesmere, and then Viscount Brackley. These three sisters are celebrated by him in a gallery of the noble ladies of the Court,§ under poetical names—"Phyllis, the flower of rare perfection;" Charillis, the pride and primrose of the rest;" and "Sweet Amaryllis, the youngest but the highest in degree." Alice, Lady Strange, Lady Derby, Lady Ellesmere and Brackley, and then again Dowager Lady Derby, the "Sweet Amaryllis" of the poet, had the rare fortune to be a personal link tween Spenser and Milton. She was among the last whom Spenser honored with his homage; and she was the first whom Milton honored; for he composed his Arcades to be acted before her by her grandchildren, and the *Masque of Comus* for her son-in-law, Lord Bridgewater, and his daughter, another Lady Alice. With these illustrious sisters Spenser claimed kindred. To each of these he dedicated one of his minor poems ; to Lady Strange, the *Tears of the Muses*; to Lady Compton, the Apologue of the Fox and the Ape, *Mother Hubberd's Tale*; to Lady Carey, the Fable of the Butterfly and the Spider, *Muiopotmos*. And in each dedication he assumed on their part the recognition of his claim.

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* Earl of Essex.
† At Cadiz, June 21, 1596.
‡ *Sonnet* LXXIV.
§ *Colin Clout's come Home again*, l. 536. Craik, *Spenser*, i. 9, 10.

> "The sisters three,
> The honour of the noble family,
> Of which I meanest boast myself to be."

Whatever his degree of relationship to them, he could hardly, even in the days of his fame, have ventured thus publicly to challenge it, unless there had been some acknowledged ground for it. There are obscure indications, which antiquarian diligence may perhaps make clear, which point to East Lancashire as the home of the particular family of Spensers to which Edmund Spenser's father belonged. Probably he was, however, in humble circumstances.

Edmund Spenser was a Londoner by education as well as birth. A recent discovery by Mr. R. B. Knowles, further illustrated by Dr. Grosart,* has made us acquainted with Spenser's school. He was a pupil, probably one of the earliest ones, of the grammar school, then recently (1560) established by the Merchant Taylors' Company, under a famous teacher, Dr. Mulcaster. Among the manuscripts at Townley Hall are preserved the account books of the executors of a bountiful London citizen, Robert Nowell, the brother of Dr. Alexander Nowell, who was Dean of St. Paul's during Elizabeth's reign, and was a leading person in the ecclesiastical affairs of the time. In these books, in a crowd of unknown names of needy relations and dependents, distressed foreigners, and parish paupers, who shared from time to time the liberality of Mr. Robert Nowell's representatives, there appear among the numerous "poor scholars" whom his wealth assisted, the names of Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes. And there, also, in the roll of the expenditure at Mr. Nowell's pompous funeral at St. Paul's in February, $156\frac{8}{9}$, among long lists of unknown men and women, high and low, who had mourning given them, among bills for fees to officials, for undertakers' charges, for heraldic pageantry and ornamentation, for abundant supplies for the sumptuous funeral banquet, are put down lists of boys from the chief London schools, St. Paul's, Westminster, and others, to whom two yards of cloth were to be given to make their gowns : and at the head of the six scholars named from Merchant Taylors' is the name of Edmund Spenser.

He was then, probably, the senior boy of the school, and in the following May he went to Cambridge. The Nowells still helped him: we read in their account books under April 28, 1569, "to Edmond Spensore, scholler of the m'chante tayler scholl, at his gowinge to penbrocke hall in chambridge, x^s." On the 20th of May he was admitted sizar, or serving clerk at Pembroke Hall; and on more than one occasion afterwards, like Hooker and like Lancelot Andrewes, also a Merchant Taylors' boy, two or three years Spenser's junior, and a member of the same college, Spenser had a share in the benefactions, small in themselves, but very numerous, with which the Nowells, after the fine fashion of the time, were accustomed to assist poor scholars at the Universities. In the visitations of Merchant Taylors' School, at which Grindal, Bishop of London, was frequently present,* it is not unlikely that his interest was attracted, in the appositions or examinations, to the promising senior boy of the school. At any rate, Spenser, who afterwards celebrated Grindal's qualities as a bishop, was admitted to a place, one which befitted a scholar in humble circumstances, in Grindal's old college. It is perhaps worth noticing that all Spenser's early friends, Grindal, the Nowells, Dr. Mulcaster, his master, were north country men.

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* See *The Spending of the Money of Robert Nowell*, 1568–1580 : from the MSS. at Townley Hall. Edited by Rev. A. B. Grosart. 1877.

Spenser was sixteen or seventeen when he left school for the university, and he entered Cambridge at the time when the struggle which was to occupy the reign of Elizabeth was just opening. At the end of the year 1569, the first distinct blow was struck against the queen and the new settlement of religion, by the Rising of the North. In the first ten years of Elizabeth's reign, Spenser's school-time at Merchant Taylors', the great quarrel had slumbered. Events abroad occupied men's minds; the religious wars in France, the death of the Duke of Guise (1563), the loss of Havre, and expulsion of the English garrisons, the close of the Council of Trent (1563), the French peace, the accession of Pius V. (156$\frac{5}{6}$). Nearer home, there was the marriage of Mary of Scotland with Henry Darnley (1565), and all the tragedy which followed, Kirk of Field (1567), Lochleven, Langside, Carlisle, the imprisonment of the pretender to the English Crown (1568). In England the authority of Elizabeth had established itself, and the internal organization of the Reformed Church was going on, in an uncertain and tentative way, but steadily. There was a struggle between Genevan exiles, who were for going too fast, and bishops and politicians, who were for going too slow; between authority and individual judgment, between home-born state traditions and foreign revolutionary zeal. But outwardly, at least, England had been peaceful. Now, however, a great change was at hand. In 1566, the Dominican Inquisitor, Michael Ghislieri, was elected Pope, under the title of Pius V.

In Pius (1566–72) were embodied the new spirit and policy of the Roman Church, as they had been created and moulded by the great Jesuit order, and by reforming bishops like Ghiberti of Verona, and Carlo Borromeo of Milan. Devout and self-denying as a saint, fierce and inflexible against abuses as a puritan, resolute and uncompromising as a Jacobin idealist or an Asiatic despot, ruthless and inexorable as an executioner, his soul was bent on re-establishing, not only by preaching and martyrdom, but by the sword and by the stake, the unity of Christendom and of its belief. Eastwards and westwards he beheld two formidable foes and two serious dangers; and he saw before him the task of his life in the heroic work of crushing English heresy and beating back Turkish misbelief. He broke through the temporizing caution of his predecessors by the Bull of Deposition against Elizabeth in 1570. He was the soul of the confederacy which won the day of Lepanto against the Ottomans in 1571. And though dead, his spirit was paramount in the slaughter of St. Bartholomew in 1572.

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* H. B. Wilson, *Hist. of Merchant Taylors' School*, p. 23.

In the year 1569, while Spenser was passing from school to college, his emissaries were already in England, spreading abroad that Elizabeth was a bastard and an apostate, incapable of filling a Christian throne, which belonged by right to the captive Mary. The seed they sowed bore fruit. In the end of the year, southern England was alarmed by the news of the rebellion of the two great Earls in the north, Percy of Northumberland and Neville of Westmoreland. Durham was sacked, and the mass restored by an insurgent host, before which an "aged gentleman," Richard Norton with his sons, bore the banner of the Five Wounds of Christ. The rebellion was easily put down, and the revenge was stern. To the men who had risen at the instigation of the Pope and in the cause of Mary, Elizabeth gave, as she had sworn, "such a breakfast as never was in the North before." The hangman finished the work on those who had escaped the sword. Poetry, early and late, has recorded the dreary fate of those brave victims of a mistaken cause, in the ballad of the *Rising of the North*, and in the *White Doe of Rylstone*. It was the signal given for the internecine war which was to follow between Rome and Elizabeth. And it was the first great public event which Spenser would hear of in all men's mouths, as he entered on manhood, the prelude and augury of fierce and dangerous years to come. The nation awoke to the certainty—one which so profoundly affects sentiment and character both in a nation and in an individual—that among the habitual and fixed conditions of life is that of having a serious and implacable enemy ever to reckon with.

And in this year, apparently in the transition-time between school and college, Spenser's literary ventures began. The evidence is curious, but it seems to be clear. In 1569, a refugee Flemish physician from Antwerp, who had fled to England from the "abominations of the Roman Antichrist" and the persecutions of the Duke of Alva, John Vander Noodt, published one of those odd miscellanies, fashionable at the time, half moral and poetical, half fiercely polemical, which he called a "*Theatre*, wherein be represented as well the Miseries and Calamities which follow the voluptuous Worldlings, as also the great Joys and Pleasures which the Faithful do enjoy—an argument both profitable and delectable to all that sincerely love the word of God." This "little treatise" was a mixture of verse and prose, setting forth, in general, the vanity of the world, and, in particular, predictions of the ruin of Rome and Antichrist: and it enforced its lessons by illustrative woodcuts. In this strange jumble are preserved, we can scarcely doubt, the first compositions which we know of Spenser's. Among the pieces are some Sonnets of Petrarch, and some Visions of the French poet Joachim du Bellay, whose poems were published in 1568. In the collection itself, these pieces are said by the compiler to have been translated by him out of Brabants speech," and "out of Dutch into English." But in a volume of "poems of the world's vanity," and published years afterwards, in 1591, ascribed to Spenser, and put together, apparently with his consent, by his publisher, are found these very pieces from Petrarch and Du Bellay. The translations from Petrarch are almost literally the same, and are said to have been "formerly translated." In the Visions of Du Bellay there is this difference, that the earlier translations are in blank verse, and the later ones are rhymed as sonnets; but the change does not destroy the manifest identity of the two translations. So that unless Spenser's publisher, to whom the poet had certainly given some of his genuine pieces for the volume, is not to be trusted—which, of course, is possible, but not probable—or unless—what is in the last degree inconceivable—Spenser had afterwards been willing to take the trouble of turning the blank verse of Du Bellay's unknown translator into rhyme, the Dutchman who dates his *Theatre of Worldlings* on the 25th May, 1569, must have employed the promising and fluent school-boy to furnish him with an English versified form, of which he himself took the credit, for compositions which he professes to have known only in the Brabants or Dutch translations. The sonnets from Petrarch are translated with much command of language; there occurs in them, what was afterwards a favorite thought of Spenser's:

> —"The Nymphs,
> That sweetly in accord did *tune their voice*
> *To the soft sounding of the waters' fall.*" *

It is scarcely credible that the translator of the sonnets could have caught so much as he has done of the spirit of Petrarch without having been able to read the Italian original; and if Spenser was the translator, it is a curious illustration of the fashionableness of Italian literature in the days of Elizabeth, that a school-boy just leaving Merchant Taylors' should have been so much interested in it. Dr. Mulcaster, his master, is said by Warton to have given special attention to the teaching of the English language.

If these translations were Spenser's he must have gone to Cambridge with a faculty of verse, which for his time may be compared to that with which winners of prize poems go to the universities now. But there was this difference, that the school-boy versifiers of our days are rich with the accumulated experience and practice of the most varied and magnificent poetical literature in the world; while Spenser had but one really great English model behind him; and Chaucer, honored as he was, had become in Elizabeth's time, if not obsolete, yet in his diction very far removed from the living language of the day. Even Milton, in his boyish compositions, wrote after Spenser and Shakspeare, with their contemporaries, had created modern English poetry. Whatever there was in Spenser's early verses of grace and music was of his own finding: no one of his own time, except in occasional and fitful snatches, like stanzas of Sackville's, had shown him the way. Thus equipped, he entered the student world, then full of pedantic and ill-applied learning, of the disputations of Calvinistic theology, and of the beginnings of those highly speculative puritanical controversies, which were the echo at the University of the great political struggles of the day, and were soon to become so seriously practical. The University was represented to the authorities in London as being in a state of dangerous excitement, troublesome and mutinous. Whitgift, afterwards Elizabeth's favorite archbishop, Master, first of Pembroke, and then of Trinity, was Vice-Chancellor of the University; but, as the guardian of established order, he found it difficult to keep in check the violent and revolutionary spirit of the theological schools. Calvin was beginning to be set up there as the infallible doctor of Protestant theology. Cartwright from the Margaret Professor's chair was teaching the exclusive and divine claims of the Geneva platform of discipline, and in defiance of the bishops and the government was denouncing the received Church polity and ritual as Popish and anti-Christian. Cartwright, an extreme and uncompromising man, was deprived in 1570; but the course which things were taking under the influence of Rome and Spain gave force to his lessons and warnings, and strengthened his party. In this turmoil of opinions, amid these hard and technical debates, these fierce conflicts between the highest authorities, and this unsparing violence and bitterness of party recriminations, Spenser, with the tastes and faculties of a poet, and the love not only of what was beautiful, but of what was meditative and dreamy, began his university life.

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* Comp. *Sheph. Cal.* April l. 36. June l. 8. F. Q. 6. 10. 7.

It was not a favorable atmosphere for the nurture of a great poet. But it suited one side of Spenser's mind, as it suited that of all but the most independent Englishmen of the time—Shakspeare, Bacon, the copious correspondence in the Rolls and at Lambeth. There was Long, the Primate of Armagh; there were Sir Robert Dillon, ihe Chief Ralegh. Little is known of Spenser's Cambridge career. It is probable, from the persons with whom he was connected, that he would not be indifferent to the debates around him, and that his religious prepossessions were then, as afterwards, in favor of the conforming puritanism in the Church, as opposed to the extreme and thorough-going puritanism of Cartwright. Of the conforming puritans, who would have been glad of a great approximation to the Swiss model, but who, whatever their private wishes or dislikes, thought it best, for good reasons or bad, to submit to the strong determination of the government against it, and to accept what the government approved and imposed, Grindal, who held successively the great sees of London, York, and Canterbury, and Nowell, Dean of St. Paul's, Spenser's benefactor, were representative types. Grindal, a waverer like many others in opinion, had also a noble and manly side to his character, in his hatred of practical abuses, and in the courageous and obstinate resistance which he could offer to power when his sense of right was outraged. Grindal, as has been said, was perhaps instrumental in getting Spenser into his own old college, Pembroke Hall, with the intention, it may be, as was the fashion of bishops of that time, of becoming his patron. But certainly after his disgrace in 1577, and when it was not quite safe to praise a great man under the displeasure of the Court, Grindal is the person whom Spenser first singled out for his warmest and heartiest praise. He is introduced under a thin disguise, "Algrind," in Spenser's earliest work after he left Cambridge, the *Shepherd's Calendar*, as the pattern of the true and faithful Christian pastor, And if Pembroke Hall retained at all the tone and tendencies of such masters as Ridley, Grindal, and Whitgift, the school in which Spenser grew up was one of their mitigated puritanism. But his puritanism was political and national rather than religious. He went heartily with the puritan party in their intense hatred of Rome and Roman partisans; he went with them also in their denunciations of the scandals and abuses of the ecclesiastical government at home. But in temper of mind and intellectual bias he had little in common with the puritans. For the stern austerities of Calvinism, its fierce and eager scholasticism, its isolation from human history, human enjoyment, and all the manifold play and variety of human character, there could not be much sympathy in a man like Spenser, with his easy and flexible nature, keenly alive to all beauty, an admirer even when he was not a lover of the alluring pleasures of which the world is full, with a perpetual struggle going on in him, between his strong instincts of purity and right, and his passionate appreciation of every charm and grace. He shows no signs of agreement with the internal characteristics of the puritans, their distinguishing theology their peculiarities of thought and habits, their protests, right or wrong, against the fashions and amusements of the world. If not a man of pleasure, he yet threw himself without scruple into the tastes, the language, the pursuits, of the gay and gallant society in which they saw so much evil: and from their narrow view of life, and the contempt, dislike, and fear with which they regarded the whole field of human interest, he certainly was parted by the widest gulf, Indeed, he had not the sternness and concentration of purpose which made Milton the great puritan poet.

Spenser took his Master's degree in 1576, and then left Cambridge. He gained no Fellowship, and there is nothing to show how he employed himself. His classical learning, whether acquired there or elsewhere, was copious, but curiously inaccurate ; and the only specimen remaining of his Latin composition in verse is contemptible in its mediæval clumsiness. We know nothing of his Cambridge life except the friendships which he formed there. An intimacy began at Cambridge of the closest and most affectionate kind, which lasted long into after-life, between him and two men of his college, one older in standing than himself, the other younger ; Gabriel Harvey, first a fellow of Pembroke, and then a student or teacher of civil law at Trinity Hall, and Edward Kirke, like Spenser, a sizar at Pembroke, recently identified with the E K. who was the editor and commentator of Spenser's earliest work, the anonymous *Shepherd's Calendar*. Of the younger friend this is the most that is known. That he was deeply in Spenser's confidence as a literary coadjutor, and possibly in other ways, is shown in the work which he did. But Gabriel Harvey was a man who had influence on Spenser's ideas and purposes, and on the direction of his efforts. He was a classical scholar of much distinction in his day, well read in the Italian authors then so fashionable, and regarded as a high authority on questions of criticism and taste. Except to students of Elizabethan literary history, he has become an utterly obscure personage ; and he has not usually been spoken of with much respect. He had the misfortune, later in life, to plunge violently into the scurrilous quarrels of the day, and as he was matched with wittier and more popular antagonists, he has come down to us as a foolish pretender, or at least as a dull and stupid scholar who knew little of the real value of the books he was always ready to quote, like the pedant of the comedies, or Shakspeare's schoolmaster Holofernes. Further, he was one who, with his classical learning, had little belief in the resources of his mother-tongue, and he was one of the earliest and most confident supporters of a plan then fashionable, for reforming English verse, by casting away its natural habits and rhythms, and imposing on it the laws of the classical metres. In this he was not singular. The professed treatises of this time on poetry, of which there were several, assume the same theory, as the mode of "reforming" and duly elevating English verse. It was eagerly accepted by Philip Sidney and his Areopagus of wits at court, who busied themselves in devising rules of their own—improvements as they thought on those of the university men—for English hexameters and sapphics, or, as they called it, artificial versifying. They regarded the comparative value of the native English rhythms and the classical metres much as our ancestors of Addison's day regarded the comparison between Gothic and Palladian architecture. One, even if it sometimes had a certain romantic interest, was rude and coarse ; the other was the perfection of polite art and good taste. Certainly in what remains of Gabriel Harvey's writing there is much that seems to us vain and ridiculous enough; and it has been naturally surmised that he must have been a dangerous friend and counsellor to Spenser. But probably we are hard upon him. His writings, after all, are not much more affected and absurd in their outward fashion than most of the literary composition of the time; his verses are no worse than those of most of his neighbours; he was not above, but he was not below, the false taste and clumsiness of his age; and the rage for "artificial versifying" was for the moment in the air. And it must be said, that though his enthusiasm for English hexameters is of a piece with the puritan use of Scripture texts in divinity and morals, yet there is no want of hard-headed shrewdness in his remarks; indeed, in his rules for the adaptation of English words and accents to classical metres he shows clearness and good sense in apprehending the conditions of the problem, while Sidney and Spenser still appear confused and uncertain. But in spite of his pedantry, and though he had not, as we shall see, the eye to discern at first the genius of the *Faerie Queene*, he has to us the interest of having been Spenser's first and, as far as we can see, to the last, dearest friend. By both of his younger fellow-students at Cambridge he was looked up to with the deepest reverence and the most confiding affection. Their language is extravagant, but there is no reason to think that it was not genuine. E. Kirke, the editor of Spenser's first venture, the *Shepherd's Calendar*, commends the "new poet" to his patronage, and to the protection of his "mighty rhetoric," and exhorts Harvey himself to seize the poetical "garland which to him alone is due." Spenser speaks in the same terms: "*veruntamen te sequor solum; nunquam vero assequar.*" Portions of the early correspondence between Harvey and Spenser have been preserved to us, possibly by Gabriel Harvey's self-satisfaction in regard to his own compositions. But with the pedagogue's jocoseness, and a playfulness which is like that of an elephant, it shows on both sides easy frankness, sincerity, and warmth, and not a little of the early character of the younger man. In Spenser's earliest poetry, his pastorals, Harvey appears among the imaginary rustics, as the poet's "special and most familiar friend," under the name of Hobbinol—

"Good Hobbinol, that was so true."

To him Spenser addresses his confidences, under the name of Colin Clout, a name borrowed from Skelton, a satirical poet of Henry VIII.'s time, which Spenser kept throughout his poetical career. Harvey reappears in one of Spenser's latest writings, a return to the early pastoral, *Colin Clout's come home again*, a picture drawn in distant Ireland of the brilliant but disappointing court of Elizabeth. And from Ireland, in 1586, was addressed to Harvey by his "devoted friend during life" the following fine sonnet, which, whatever may have been the merit of Harvey's criticisms and his literary quarrels with Greene and Nash, shows at least Spenser's unabated honor for him.

"To THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL, MY SINGULAR GOOD FRIEND, M. GABRIEL HARVEY, DOCTOR OF THE LAWS.

"HARVEY, the happy above happiest men
I read; that, sitting like a looker on
Of this world's stage, dost note with critic pen
The sharp dislikes of each condition;
And, as one careless of suspicion,
Ne fawnest for the favour of the great;
Ne fearest foolish reprehension
Of faulty men, which danger to thee threat;
But freely dost, of what thee list, entreat,
Like a great lord of peerless liberty;
Lifting the good up to high honour's seat,
And the evil damning ever more to die;
For life and death is in thy doomful writing;
So thy renown lives ever by enditing.

"Dublin, this xviii. of July, 1586. Your devoted friend, during life,
"EDMUND SPENSER."

Between Cambridge and Spenser's appearance in London there is a short but obscure interval. What is certain is that he spent part of it in the North of England; that he was busy with various poetical works, one of which was soon to make him known as a new star in the poetical heaven; and lastly, that in the effect on him of a deep but unrequited passion he then received what seems to have been a strong and determining influence on his character and life. It seems likely that his sojourn in the north, which perhaps first introduced the London-bred scholar, the "Southern Shepherd's Boy," to the novel and rougher country life of distant Lancashire, also gave form and local character to his first considerable work. But we do not know for certain where his abode was in the north; of his literary activity, which must have been considerable, we only partially know the fruit; and of the lady whom he made so famous, that her name became a consecrated word in the poetry of the time, of Rosalind, the "Widow's Daughter of the Glen," whose refusal of his suit, and preference for another, he lamented so bitterly, yet would allow no one else to blame, we know absolutely nothing. She would not be his wife; but apparently he never ceased to love her through all the chances and temptations, and possibly errors of his life, even apparently in the midst of his passionate admiration of the lady whom, long afterwards, he did marry. To her kindred and condition various clues have been suggested, only to provoke and disappoint us. Whatever her condition, she was able to measure Spenser's powers: Gabriel Harvey has preserved one of her compliments—"Gentle Mistress Rosalind once reported him to have all the intelligences at commandment; and at another christened him her *Signior Pegaso.*" But the unknown Rosalind had given an impulse to the young poet's powers, and a color to his thoughts, and had enrolled Spenser in that band and order of poets—with one exception, not the greatest order—to whom the wonderful passion of love, in its heights and its depths, is the element on which their imagination works, and out of which it moulds its most beautiful and characteristic creations.

But in October, 1579, he emerges from obscurity. If we may trust the correspondence between Gabriel Harvey and Spenser, which was published at the time, Spenser was then in London.* It was the time of the crisis of the Alençon courtship, while the queen was playing fast and loose with her Valois lover, whom she playfully called her frog; when all about her, Burghley, Leicester, Sidney, and Walsingham, were dismayed both at the plan itself and at her vacillations; and just when the Puritan pamphleteer, who had given expression to the popular disgust at a French marriage, especially at a connection with the family which had on its hands the blood of St. Bartholomew, was sentenced to lose his right hand as a seditious libeller. Spenser had become acquainted with Philip Sidney, and Sidney's literary and courtly friends. He had been received into the household of Sidney's uncle, Lord Leicester, and dates one of his letters from Leicester House. Among his employments he had written "*Stemmata Dudleiana.*" He is doubting whether or not to publish, "to utter," some of his poetical compositions: he is doubting, and asks Harvey's advice, whether or not to dedicate them to His Excellent Lordship, "lest by our much cloying their noble ears he should gather contempt of myself, or else seem rather for gain and commodity to do it, and some sweetness that I have already tasted." Yet he thinks that when occasion is so fairly offered of estimation and preferment, it may be well to use it: "while the iron is hot, it is good striking; and minds of nobles vary, as their estates." And he was on the eve of starting across the sea to be employed in Leicester's service, on some permanent mission in France, perhaps in connection with the Alençon intrigues. He was thus launched into what was looked upon as the road to preferment; in his case, as it turned out, a very subordinate form of public employment, which was to continue almost for his lifetime. Sidney had recognized his unusual power, if not yet his genius. He brought him forward; perhaps he accepted him as a friend. Tradition makes him Sidney's companion at Penhurst; in his early poems, Kent is the county with which he seems most familiar. But Sidney certainly made him known to the queen; he probably recommended him as a promising servant to Leicester; and he impressed his own noble and beautiful character deeply on Spenser's mind. Spenser saw and learned in him what was then the highest type of the finished gentleman. He led Spenser astray. Sidney was not without his full share of that affectation which was then thought refinement. Like Gabriel Harvey, he induced Spenser to waste his time on the artificial versifying which was in vogue. But such faults and mistakes of fashion—and in one shape or another they are inevitable in all ages—were as nothing compared to the influence on a highly receptive nature of a character so elevated and pure, so genial, so brave and true. It was not in vain that Spenser was thus brought so near to his "Astrophel."

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* Published in June, 1580. Reprinted incompletely in Haslewood, *Ancient Critical Essays* (1815), ii. 255. Extracts given in editions of Spenser by Hughes, Todd, and Morris. The letters are of April, 1579, and October, 1580.

These letters tell us all that we know of Spenser's life at this time. During these anxious eighteen months, and connected with persons like Sidney and Leicester, Spenser only writes to Harvey on literary subjects. He is discreet, and will not indulge Harvey's "desire to hear of my late being with her Majesty." According to a literary fashion of the time, he writes and is addressed as *M. Immerito*, and the great business which occupies him and fills the letters is the scheme devised in Sidney's *Areopagus* for the "general surceasing and silence of bald Rymers, and also of the very best of them too; and for prescribing certain laws and rules of quantities of English syllables for English verse." Spenser "is more in love with his English versifying than with ryming"—"which," he says to Harvey, "I should have done long since, if I would then have followed your counsel." Harvey, of course, is delighted; he thanks the good angel which puts it into the heads of Sidney and Edward Dyer, "the two very diamonds of her Majesty's court," "our very Castor and Pollux," to "help forward our new famous enterprise for the exchanging of barbarous rymes for artificial verses;" and the whole subject is discussed at great length between the two friends; "Mr. Drant's" rules are compared with those of "Mr. Sidney," revised by "Mr. Immerito;" and examples, highly illustrative of the character of the "famous enterprise," are copiously given. In one of Harvey's letters we have a curious account of changes of fashion in studies and ideas at Cambridge. They seem to have changed since Spenser's time.

> "I beseech you all this while, what news at *Cambridge?* *Tully* and *Demosthenes* nothing so much studied as they were wont: *Livy* and *Sallust* perhaps more, rather than less: *Lucian* never so much: *Aristotle* much named but little read: *Xenophon* and *Plato* reckoned amongst discoursers, and conceited superficial fellows; much verbal and sophistical jangling; little subtle and effectual disputing. *Machiavel* a great man: *Castilio* of no small repute: *Petrarch* and *Boccace* in every man's mouth: *Galateo* and *Guazzo* never so happy: but some acquainted with *Unico Aretino*: the *French* and *Italian* highly regarded: the *Latin* and *Greek* but lightly. The *Queen Mother* at the beginning or end of every conference: all inquisitive after news: new *books*, new fashions, new laws, new officers, and some after new elements, some after new heavens and hells too. *Turkish* affairs familiarly known: castles built in the air: much ado, and little help: in no age so little so much made of; every one highly in his own favor. Something made of nothing, in spight of Nature: numbers made of cyphers, in spight of Art. Oxen and asses, notwithstanding the absurdity it seemed to *Plautus*, drawing in the same yoke: the Gospel taught, not learnt; Charity cold; nothing good but by imputation; the Ceremonial Law in word abrogated, the Judicial in effect disannull'd, the Moral abandon'd; *the Light*, *the Light* in every man's lips, but mark

their eyes, and you will say they are rather like owls than eagles. As of old books, so of ancient virtue, honesty, fidelity, equity, new abridgments; every day spawns new opinions: heresy in divinity, in philosophy, in humanity, in manners, grounded upon hearsay; doctors contemn'd; the *devil* not so hated as the *pope;* many invectives, but no amendment. No more ado about caps and surplices; Mr. *Cartwright* quite forgotten.

* * * * * * * * * * *

David, *Ulysses*, and *Solon* feign'd themselves fools and madmen; our fools and madmen feign themselves *Davids*, *Ulysses's*, and *Solons*. It is pity fair weather should do any hurt; but I know what peace and quietness hath done with some melancholy pickstraws."

The letters preserve a good many touches of character which are interesting. This, for instance, which shows Spenser's feeling about Sidney. "New books," writes Spenser, "I hear of none, but only of one, that writing a certain book called *The School of Abuse* [Stephen Gosson's *Invective against poets*, *pipers*, *ployers*, *&c.*], and dedicating to M. Sidney, was for his labor scorned: *if at least it be in the goodness of that nature to scorn.*" As regards Spenser himself, it is clear from the letters that Harvey was not without uneasiness lest his friend, from his gay and pleasure-loving nature, and the temptations round him, should be carried away into the vices of an age which, though very brilliant and high-tempered, was also a very dissolute one. He couches his counsels mainly in Latin; but they point to real danger; and he adds in English—"Credit me, I will never lin [=cease] baiting at you, till I have rid you quite of this yonkerly and womanly humour." But in the second pair of letters of April, 1580, a lady appears. Whether Spenser was her husband or her lover, we know not; but she is his "sweetheart." The two friends write of her in Latin. Spenser sends in Latin the saucy messages of his sweatheart, "meum corculum," to Harvey; Harvey, with academic gallantry, sends her in Latin as many thanks for her charming letter as she has hairs, "half golden, half silver, half jewelled, in her little head;"—she is a second little Rosalind—"altera Rosalindula," whom he salutes as "Domina Immerito, mea bellissima Colina Clouta." But whether wife or mistress, we hear of her no more. Further, the letters contain notices of various early works of Spenser. The "new" *Shepherd's Calendar*, of which more will be said, had just been published. And in this correspondence of April, 1580, we have the first mention of the *Faerie Queene*. The compositions here mentioned have been either lost, or worked into his later poetry; his *Dreams*, *Epithalamion Thamesis*, apparently in the "reformed verse," his *Dying Pelican*, his *Slumber*, his *Stemmata Dudleiana*, his *Comedies*. They show at least the activity and eagerness of the writer in his absorbing pursuit. But he was still in bondage to the belief that English poetry ought to try to put on a classical dress. It is strange that the man who had written some of the poetry in the *Shepherd's Calendar* should have found either satisfaction or promise in the following attempt at Trimeter Iambics, "And nowe requite I you with the like, not with the verye beste, but with the verye shortest, namely, with a few Iambickes: I dare warrant they be precisely perfect for the feete (as you can easily judge), and varie not one inch from the Rule. I will imparte yours to Maister *Sidney* and Maister *Dyer* at my nexte going to the Courte. I praye you, keepe mine close to yourself, or your verie entire friends, Maister *Preston*, Maister *Still*, and the reste.

"*Iambicum Trimetrum.*

"Unhappie Verse, the witnesse of my unhappie state,
Make thy selfe fluttring wings of thy fast flying
Thought, and fly forth unto my Love wheresover she be:

"Whether lying reastlesse in heavy bedde, or else
Sitting so cheerlesse at the cheerfull boorde, or else
Playing alone carelesse on hir heavenlie Virginals.

"If in Bed, tell hir, that my eyes can take no reste:
If at Boorde, tell hir that my mouth can eate no meate:
If at hir Virginals, tell hir I can heare no mirth.

"Asked why? say: Waking Love suffereth no sleepe:
Say, that raging Love dothe appall the weake stomacke:
Say, that lamenting Love marreth the Musicall.

"Tell hir, that hir pleasures were wonte to lull me asleepe:
Tell hir, that hir beautie was wante to feede mine eyes:
Tell hir, that hir sweete Tongue was wante to make me mirth.:

"Nowe doe I nightly waste, wanting my kindely reste:
Nowe doe I dayly starve, wanting my lively foode:
Nowe doe I alwayes dye, wanting thy timely mirth.

And if I waste, who will bewaile my heavy chaunce?
And if I starve, who will record my cursed end?
And if I dye, who will saye: *this was Immerito?*"

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW POET—THE SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR.

[1579.]

It is clear that when Spenser appeared in London, he had found out his powers and vocation as a poet. He came from Cambridge, fully conscious of the powerful attraction of the imaginative faculties, conscious of an extraordinary command over the resources of language, and with a singular gift of sensitiveness to the grace and majesty and suggestiveness of sound and rhythm, such as makes a musician. And whether he knew it or not, his mind was in reality made up as to what his English poetry was to be. In spite of opinions and fashions round him, in spite of university pedantry and the affectations of the court, in spite of Harvey's classical enthusiasm and Sidney's Areopagus, and in spite of half fancying himself converted to their views, his own powers and impulses showed him the truth, and made him understand better than his theories what a poet could and ought to do with English speech in its free play and genuine melodies. When we first come upon him, we find that at the age of twenty-seven he had not only realized an idea of English poetry far in advance of anything which his age had yet conceived or seen; but that, besides what he had executed or planned, he had already in his mind the outlines of the *Faerie Queene*, and, in some form or other, though perhaps not yet as we have it, had written some portion of it.

In attempting to revive for his own age Chaucer's suspended art, Spenser had the tendencies of the time with him. The age was looking out for some one to do for England what had been grandly done for Italy. The time, in truth, was full of poetry. The nation was just in that condition which is most favorable to an outburst of poetical life or art. It was highly excited; but it was also in a state of comparative peace and freedom from external disturbance. "An overfaint quietness," writes Sidney in 1581, lamenting that there were so few good poets, " should seem to strew the house for poets." After the first ten years of Elizabeth's reign, and the establishment of her authority, the country had begun to breathe freely, and fall into natural and regular ways. During the first half of the century it had had before it the most astonishing changes which the world had seen for centuries. These changes seemed definitely to have run their course; with the convulsions which accompanied them, their uprootings and terrors, they were gone; and the world had become accustomed to their results. The nation still had before it great events, great issues, great perils, great and indefinite prospects of adventure and achievement. The old quarrels and animosities of Europe had altered in character: from being wars between princes, and disputes of personal ambition, they had attracted into them all that interests and divides mankind, from high to low. Their animating principle was a high and a sacred cause: they had become wars of liberty, and wars of religion. The world had settled down to the fixed antipathies and steady rivalries of centuries to come. But the mere shock of transition was over. Yet the remembrance of the great break-up was still fresh. For fifty years the English people had had before its eyes the great vicissitudes which make tragedy. They had seen the most unforeseen and most unexpected revolutions in what had for ages been held certain and immovable; the overthrow of the strongest institutions and most venerable authorities; the violent shifting of feelings from faith to passionate rejection, from reverence to scorn and a hate which could not be satisfied. They had seen the strangest turns of fortune, the most wonderful elevations to power, the most terrible visitations of disgrace. They had seen the mightiest ruined, the brightest and most admired brought down to shame and death. men struck down with all the forms of law, whom the age honored as its noblest ornaments. They had seen the flames of martyr or heretic, heads which had worn a crown laid one after another on the block, controversies, not merely between rivals for power, but between the deepest principles and the most rooted creeds, settled on the scaffold. Such a time of surprise—of hope and anxiety, of horror and anguish to-day, of relief and exultation to-morrow—had hardly been to England as the first half of the sixteenth century. All that could stir men's souls, all that could inflame their hearts, or that could wring them, had happened.

And yet, compared with previous centuries, and with what was going on abroad, the time now was a time of peace, and men lived securely. Wealth was increasing. The Wars of the Roses had left the crown powerful to enforce order and protect industry and trade. The nation was beginning to grow rich. When the day's work was done, men's leisure was not disturbed by the events of neighboring war. They had time to open their imaginations to the great spectacle which had been unrolled before them, to reflect upon it, to put into shape their thoughts about it. The intellectual movement of the time had reached England, and its strong impulse to mental efforts in new and untried directions was acting powerfully upon Englishmen. But though there was order and present peace at home, there was much to keep men's minds on the stretch. There was quite enough danger and uncertainty to wind up their feelings to a high pitch. But danger was not so pressing as to prevent them from giving full place to the impressions of the strange and eventful scene round them, with its grandeur, its sadness, its promises. In such a state of things there is everything to tempt poetry. There are its materials and its stimulus, and there is the leisure to use its materials.

But the poet had not yet been found; and everything connected with poetry was in the disorder of ignorance and uncertainty. Between the counsels of a pedantic scholarship and the rude and hesitating but true instincts of the natural English ear every one was at sea. Yet it seemed as if every one was trying his hand at verse. Popular writing took that shape. The curious and unique record of literature preserved in the registers of the Stationers' Company shows that the greater proportion of what was published, or at least entered for publication, was in the shape of ballads. The ballad vied with the sermon in doing what the modern newspaper does, in satisfying the public craving for information, amusement, or guidance. It related the last great novelty, the last great battle or crime, a storm or monstrous birth. It told some pathetic or burlesque story, or it moralized on the humors or follies of classes and professions, of young and old, of men and of women. It sang the lover's hopes or sorrows, or the adventures of some hero of history or romance.

It might be a fable, a satire, a libel, a squib, a sacred song or paraphrase, a homily. But about all that it treated it sought to throw more or less the color of imagination. It appealed to the reader's feelings, or sympathy, or passion. It attempted to raise its subject above the level of mere matter of fact. It sought for choice and expressive words; it called in the help of measure and rhythm. It aimed at a rude form of art. Presently the critical faculty came into play. Scholars, acquainted with classical models and classical rules, began to exercise their judgment on their own poetry, to construct theories, to review the performances before them, to suggest plans for the improvement of the poetic art. Their essays are curious, as the beginnings of that great critical literature which in England, in spite of much infelicity, has only been second to the poetry which it judged. But in themselves they are crude, meagre, and helpless; interesting mainly as showing how much craving there was for poetry, and how little good poetry to satisfy it, and what inconceivable doggerel could be recommended by reasonable men, as fit to be admired and imitated, There is fire and eloquence in Philip Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* (1581); but his ideas about poetry were floating, loose, and ill-defined, and he had not much to point to as of first-rate excellence in recent writers. Webbe's *Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586), and the more elaborate work ascribed to George Puttenham (1589), works of tame and artificial learning without Sidney's fire, revealed equally the poverty, as a whole, of what had been as yet produced in England as poetry, in spite of the wide-spread passion for poetry. The specimens which they quote and praise are mostly grotesque to the last degree. Webbe improves some gracefully flowing lines of Spenser's into the most pretentious Sapphics; and Puttenham squeezes compositions into the shapes of triangles, eggs, and pilasters. Gabriel Harvey is accused by his tormentor, Nash, of doing the same, "of having writ verse in all kinds, as in form of a pair of gloves, a dozen of points, a pair of spectacles, a two-hand sword, a poynado, a colossus, a pyramid, a painter's easel, a market cross, a trumpet, an anchor, a pair of pot-hooks." Puttenham's Art of Poetry, with its books, one on Proportion, the other on Ornament, might be compared to an Art of War, of which one book treated of barrack drill, and the other of busbies, sabretasches, and different forms of epaulettes and feathers. These writers do not want good sense or the power to make a good remark. But the stuff and material for good criticism, the strong and deep poetry, which makes such criticisms as theirs seem so absurd, had not yet appeared.

A change was at hand; and the suddenness of it is one of the most astonishing things in literary history. The ten years from 1580 to 1590 present a set of critical essays, giving a picture of English poetry of which, though there are gleams of a better hope, and praise is specially bestowed on a "new poet," the general character is feebleness, fantastic absurdity, affectation, and bad taste. Force, and passion, and simple truth, and powerful thoughts of the world and man, are rare; and poetical reformers appear maundering about miserable attempts at English hexameters and sapphics. What was to be looked for from all that? Who could suppose what was preparing under it all? But the dawn was come. The next ten years, from 1590 to 1600, not only saw the *Faerie Queene*, but they were the years of the birth of the English Drama. Compare the idea which we get of English poetry from Philip Sidney's Defence in 1581, and Puttenham's treatise in 1589, I do not say with Shakspeare, but with Lamb's selections from the Dramatic Poets, many of them unknown names to the majority of modern readers; and we see at once what a bound English pretry has made; we see that a new spring-time of power and purpose and poetical thought has opened; new and original forms have sprung to life of poetical grandeur, seriousness, and magnificence. From the poor and rude play-houses, with their troops of actors, most of them profligate and disreputable, their coarse excitement, their buffoonery, license, and taste for the monstrous and horrible—denounced not without reason as corrupters of public morals, preached against at Paul's Cross, expelled the city by the Corporation, classed by the law with rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, and patronized by the great and unscrupulous nobles in defiance of it—there burst forth suddenly a new poetry, which with its reality, depth, sweetness and nobleness took the world captive. The poetical ideas and aspirations of the Englishmen of the time had found at last adequate interpreters, and their own national and unrivalled expression.

And in this great movement Spenser was the harbinger and announcing sign. But he was only the harbinger. What he did was to reveal to English ears as it never had been revealed before, at least, since the days of Chaucer, the sweet music, the refined grace, the inexhaustible versatility of the English tongue, But his own efforts were in a different direction from that profound and insatiable seeking after the real, in thought and character, in representation and expression, which made Shakspeare so great, and his brethren great in proportion as they approached him. Spenser's genius continued to the end under the influences which were so powerful when it first unfolded itself. To the last it allied itself, in form at least, with the artificial. To the last it moved in a world which was not real, which never had existed, which, anyhow, was only a world of memory and sentiment. He never threw himself frankly on human life as it is; he always viewed it through a veil of mist which greatly altered its true colors, and often distorted its proportions. And thus while more than any one he prepared the instruments and the path for the great triumph, he himself missed the true field for the highest exercise of poetic power; he missed the highest honors of that in which he led the way.

Yet, curiously enough, it seems as if, early in his career, he was affected by the strong stream which drew Shakspeare. Among the compositions of his first period, besides *The Shepherd's Calendar*, are *Nine Comedies*—clearly real plays, which his friend Gabriel Harvey praised with enthusiasm. As early as 1579 Spenser had laid before Gabriel Harvey, for his judgment and advice, a portion of the *Faerie Queene* in some shape or another, and these nine comedies. He was standing at the parting of the ways. The allegory, with all its tempting associations and machinery, with its ingenuities and pictures, and boundless license to vagueness and to fancy, was on one side; and on the other the drama, with its *prima facie* and superficially prosaic aspects, and its kinship to what was customary and commonplace and unromantic in human life. Of the nine comedies composed on the model of those of Ariosto and Machiavelli and other Italians, every trace has perished. But this was Gabriel Harvey's opinion of the respective value of the two specimens of work submitted to him, and this was his counsel to their author. In April, 1580, he thus writes to Spenser:

> "In good faith I had once again nigh forgotten your *Faerie Queene;* howbeit, by good chance, I have now sent her home at the last neither in better or worse case than I found her. And must you of necessity have my judgment of her indeed? To be plain, I am void of all judgment, if your *Nine Comedies*, whereunto, in imitation of Herodotus, you give the name of the Nine Muses (and in one man's fancy not unworthily), come not nearer Ariosto's comedies, either for the fineness of plausible elocution, or the rareness of poetical invention, than that *Elvish Queen* doth to his *Orlando Furioso*, which notwithstanding you will needs seem to emulate and hope to overgo, as you flatly professed yourself in one of your last letters.
>
> "Besides that you know, it hath been the usual practice of the most exquisite and odd wits in all nations, and specially in Italy, rather to show, and advance themselves that way than any other: as, namely, those three notorious discoursing heads Bibiena, Machiavel, and Aretino did (to let Bembo and Ariosto pass) with the great admiration and wonderment of the whole country: being indeed reputed matchable in all points, both for conceit of wit and eloquent deciphering of matters, either with Aristophanes and Menander in Greek, or with Plautus and Terence in Latin, or with any other in any other tongue. But I will not stand greatly with you in your own matters. If so be the *Faerie Queene* be fairer in your eye than the Nine Muses, and Hobgoblin run away with the garland from Apollo: mark what I say, and yet I will not say that I thought, but there is an end for this once, and fare you well, till God or some good angel put you in a better mind."

It is plain on which side Spenser's own judgment inclined. He had probably written the comedies, as he had written English hexameters, out of deference to others, or to try his hand. But the current of his own secret thoughts, those thoughts, with their ideals and aims, which tell a man what he is made for, and where his power lies, set another way. The *Faerie Queene was* "fairer in his eye than the Nine Muses, and Hobgoblin did run away with the garland from Apollo." What Gabriel Harvey prayed for as the "better mind" did not come. And we cannot repine at a decision which gave us, in the shape which it took at last, the allegory of the *Faerie Queene.*

But the *Faerie Queene*, though already planned and perhaps begun, belongs to the last ten years of the century, to the season of fulfilment, not of promise, to the blossoming, not to the opening bud. The new hopes for poetry which Spenser brought were given in a work, which the *Faerie Queene* has eclipsed and almost obscured, as the sun puts out the morning star. Yet that which marked a turning-point in the history of our poetry was the book which came out, timidly and anonymously, in the end of 1579, or the beginning of 1580, under the borrowed title of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, a name familiar in those days as that of an early medley of astrology and homely receipts from time to time reprinted, which was the Moore's or Zadkiel's almanac of the time. It was not published ostensibly by Spenser himself, though it is inscribed to Philip Sidney in a copy of verses signed with Spenser's masking name of *Immerito*. The avowed responsibility for it might have been inconvenient for a young man pushing his fortune among the cross currents of Elizabeth's court. But it was given to the world by a friend of the author's, signing himself E.K., now identified with Spenser's fellow-student at Pembroke, Edward Kirke, who dedicates it in a long, critical epistle of some interest to the author's friend, Gabriel Harvey, and, after the fashion of some of the Italian books of poetry, accompanies it with a gloss, explaining words, and, to a certain extent, allusions. Two things are remarkable in Kirke's epistle. One is the confidence with which he announces the yet unrecognized excellence of "this one new poet," whom he is not afraid to put side by side with "that good old poet," Chaucer, the loadstar of our language." The other point is the absolute reliance which he places on the powers of the English language, handled by one who has discerned its genius, and is not afraid to use its wealth. "In my opinion, it is one praise of many that are due to this poet, that he hath labored to restore, as to their rightful heritage, such good and natural English words as have been long time out of use, or almost clean disherited, which is the only cause that our mother-tongue, which truly of itself is both full enough for prose and stately enough for verse, hath long time been counted most bare and barren of both." The friends, Kirke and Harvey, were not wrong in their estimate of the importance of Spenser's work. The "new poet," as he came to be customarily called, had really made one of those distinct steps in his art which answer to discoveries and inventions in other spheres of human interest—steps which make all behind them seem obsolete and mistaken. There was much in the new poetry which was immature and imperfect, not a little that was fantastic and affected. But it was the first adequate effort of reviving English poetry.

The *Shepherd's Calendar* consists of twelve compositions, with no other internal connection than that they are assigned respectively to the twelve months of the year. They are all different in subject, metre, character, and excellence. They are called *Ægloguse*, according to the whimsical derivation adopted from the Italians of the word which the classical writers call Eclogues: "*Æglogai*, as it were *αἰγῶν* or *αἰγονόμων λόγ οι*; that is, Goatherd's Tales." The book is in its form an imitation of that highly artificial kind of poetry which the later Italians of the Renaissance had copied from Virgil, as

Virgil had copied it from the Sicilian and Alexandrian Greeks, and to which had been given the name of Bucolic or Pastoral. Petrarch, in imitation of Virgil, had written Latin Bucolics, as he had written a Latin Epic, his *Africa.* He was followed in the next century by Baptista Mantuanus (1448–1516), the "old Mantuan" of Holofernes in *Love's Labors Lost*, whose Latin "Eglogues" became a favorite school-book in England, and who was imitated by a writer who passed for a poet in the time of Henry VIII., Alexander Barclay. In the hands of the Sicilians, pastoral poetry may have been an attempt at idealizing country life almost as genuine as some of Wordsworth's poems; but it soon ceased to be that, and in Alexandrian hands it took its place among the recognized departments of classic and literary copying, in which Virgil found and used it. But a further step had been made since Virgil had adopted it as an instrument of his genius. In the hands of Mantuan and Barclay it was a vehicle for general moralizing, and in particular for severe satire on women and the clergy. And Virgil, though he may himself speak under the names of Tityrus and Menalcas, and lament Julius Cæsar as Daphnis, did not conceive of the Roman world as peopled by flocks and sheep-cotes, or its emperors and chiefs, its poets, senators and ladies, as shepherds and shepherdesses, of higher or lower degree. But in Spenser's time, partly through undue reference to what was supposed to be Italian taste, partly owing to the tardiness of national culture, and because the poetic impulses had not yet gained power to force their way through the embarrassment and awkwardness which accompany reviving art—the world was turned, for the purposes of the poetry of civil life, into a pastoral scene. Poetical invention was held to consist in imagining an environment, a set of outward circumstances, as unlike as possible to the familiar realities of actual life and employment, in which the primary affections and passions had their play. A fantastic basis, varying according to the conventions of the fashion, was held essential for the representation of the ideal. Masquerade and hyperbole were the stage and scenery on which the poet's sweetness, or tenderness, or strength was to be put forth. The masquerade, when his subject belonged to peace, was one of shepherds; when it was one of war and adventure, it was a masquerade of knight-errantry. But a masquerade was necessary, if he was to raise his composition above the vulgarities and trivialities of the street, the fireside, the camp, or even the court; if he was to give it the dignity, the ornament, the unexpected results, the brightness and color which belong to poetry. The fashion had the sanction of the brilliant author of the *Arcadia*, the "Courtier, Soldier, Scholar," who was the "mould of form," and whose judgment was law to all men of letters in the middle years of Elizabeth, the all-accomplished Philip Sidney. Spenser submitted to this fashion from first to last. When he ventured on a considerable poetical enterprise, he spoke his thoughts, not in his own name nor as his contemporaries ten years later did, through the mouth of characters in a tragic or comic drama, but through imaginary rustics, to whom every one else in the world was a rustic, and lived among the sheep-folds, with a background of downs or vales or fields, and the open sky above. His shepherds and goatherds bare the homely names of native English clowns, Diggon Davie, Willye, and Piers; Colin Clout, adopted from Skelton, stands for Spenser himself; Hobbinol, for Gabriel Harvey; Cuddie, perhaps for Edward Kirke; names revived by Ambrose Phillips, and laughed at by Pope, when pastorals again came into vogue with the wits of Queen Anne.* With them are mingled classical ones like Menalcas, French ones from Marot, anagrams like Algrind for Grindal, significant ones like Palinode, plain ones like Lettice, and romantic ones like Rosalind; and no incongruity seems to be found in matching a beautiful shepherdess named Dido with a Great Shepherd called Lobbin, or, when the verse requires it, Lobb. And not merely the speakers in the dialogue are shepherds; every one is in their view a shepherd. Chaucer is the "god of shepherds," and Orpheus is a—

> "Shepherd that did fetch his dame
> From Plutoe's baleful bower withouten leave."

The "fair Elisa" is the Queen of shepherds all; her great father is Pan, the shepherds' god; and Anne Boleyn is Syrinx. It is not unnatural that when the clergy are spoken of, as they are in three of the poems, the figure should be kept up. But it is curious to find that the shepherds' god, the great Pan, who stands in one connection for Henry VIII., should in another represent in sober earnest the Redeemer and Judge of the world.†

The poems framed in this grotesque setting are on many themes, and of various merit, and probably of different dates. Some are simply amatory effusions of an ordinary character, full of a lover's despair and complaint. Three or four are translations or imitations; translations from Marot, imitations from Theocritus, Bion, or Virgil. Two of them contain fables told with great force and humor. The story of the Oak and the Briar, related, as his friendly commentator Kirke says, "so lively and so feelingly, as if the thing were set forth in some picture before our eyes," for the warning of "disdainful younkers," is a first-fruit and promise of Spenser's skill in vivid narrative. The fable of the Fox and the Kid, a curious illustration of the popular discontent at the negligence of the clergy, and the popular suspicions about the arts of Roman intriguers, is told with great spirit, and with mingled humor and pathos. There is, of course, a poem in honor of the great queen, who was the goddess of their idolatry to all the wits and all the learned of England, the "faire Eliza," and a compliment is paid to Leicester,

> "The worthy whom she loveth best,—
> That first the White Bear to the stake did bring."

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* In the *Guardian*, No. 40. Compare Johnson's *Life of Ambrose Phillips.*

† *Shepherd's Calendar*, May, July, and September.

Two of them are avowedly burlesque imitations of rustic dialect and banter, carried on with much spirit. One composition is a funeral tribute to some unknown lady; another is a complaint of the neglect of poets by the great. In three of the Æglogues he comes on a more serious theme; they are vigorous satires on the loose living and greediness of clergy forgetful of their charge, with strong invectives against foreign corruption and against the wiles of the wolves and foxes of Rome, with frequent allusions to passing incidents in the guerilla war with the seminary priests, and with a warm eulogy on the faithfulness and wisdom of Archbishop Grindal, whose name is disguised as old Algrind, and with whom in his disgrace the poet is not afraid to confess deep sympathy. They are, in a poetical form, part of that manifold and varied system of Puritan aggression on the established ecclesiastical order of England, which went through the whole scale from the "Admonition to Parliament," and the lectures of Cartwright and Travers, to the libels of Martin Mar-prelate: a system of attack which, with all its injustice and violence, and with all its mischievous purposes, found but too much justification in the inefficiency and corruption of many both of the bishops and clergy, and in the rapacious and selfish policy of the government, forced to starve and cripple the public service, while great men and favorites built up their fortunes out of the prodigal indulgence of the Queen.

The collection of poems is thus a very miscellaneous one, and cannot be said to be in its subjects inviting. The poet's system of composition, also, has the disadvantage of being to a great degree unreal, forced, and unnatural. Departing from the precedent of Virgil and the Italians, but perhaps copying the artificial Doric of the Alexandrians, he professes to make his language and style suitable to the "ragged and rustical" rudeness of the shepherds whom he brings on the scene, by making it both archaic and provincial. He found in Chaucer a store of forms and words sufficiently well known to be with a little help intelligible, and sufficiently out of common use to give the character of antiquity to a poetry which employed them. And from his sojourn in the North he is said to have imported a certain number of local peculiarities which would seem unfamiliar and harsh in the South. His editor's apology for this use of "ancient solemn words," as both proper and as ornamental, is worth quoting; it is an early instance of what is supposed to be not yet common, a sense of pleasure in that wildness which we call picturesque.

> "And first for the words to speak: I grant they be something hard, and of most men unused: yet English, and also used of most excellent Authors and most famous Poets. In whom, when as this our Poet hath been much travelled and thoroughly read, how could it be (as that worthy Orator said), but that 'walking in the sun, although for other cause he walked, yet needs he mought be sunburnt;' and having the sound of those ancient poets still ringing in his ears, he mought needs, in singing, hit out some of their tunes. But whether he useth them by such casualty and custom, or of set purpose and choice, as thinking them fittest for such rustical rudeness of shepherds, either for that their rough sound would make his rhymes

more ragged and rustical, or else because such old and obsolete words are most used of country folks, sure I think, and I think not amiss, that they bring great grace, and, as one would say, authority, to the verse. . . . Yet neither everywhere must old words be stuffed in, nor the common Dialect and manner of speaking so corrupted thereby, that, as in old buildings, it seem disorderly and ruinous. But as in most exquisite pictures they use to blaze and portrait not only the dainty lineaments of beauty, but also round about it to shadow the rude thickets and craggy cliffs, that by the baseness of such parts, more excellency may acrue to the principal—for oftimes we find ourselves I know not how, singularly delighted with the show of such natural rudeness, and take great pleasure in that disorderly order :—even so do these rough and harsh terms enlumine, and make more clearly to appear, the brightness of brave and glorious words. So oftentimes a discord in music maketh a comely concordance."

But when allowance is made for an eclectic and sometimes pedantic phraseology, and for mannerisms to which the fashion of the age tempted him, such as the extravagant use of alliteration, or, as they called it, "hunting the letter," the *Shepherd's Calendar* is, for its time, of great interest.

Spenser's force, and sustained poetical power, and singularly musical ear are conspicuous in this first essay of his genius. In the poets before him of this century, fragments and stanzas, and perhaps single pieces might be found, which might be compared with his work. Fugitive pieces, chiefly amatory, meet us of real sprightliness, or grace, or tenderness. The stanzas which Sackville, afterwards Lord Buckhurst, contributed to the collection called the *Mirror of Magistrates*,* are marked with a pathetic majesty, a genuine sympathy for the precariousness of greatness, which seem a prelude to the Elizabethan drama. But these fragments were mostly felicitous efforts, which soon passed on into the ungainly, the uncouth, the obscure, or the grotesque. But in the *Shepherd's Calendar* we have for the first time in the century the swing, the command, the varied resources of the real poet, who is not driven by failing language or thought into frigid or tumid absurdities. Spenser is master over himself and his instrument even when he uses it in a way which offends our taste. There are passages in the *Shepherd's Calendar* of poetical eloquence, of refined vigor, and of musical and imaginative sweetness, such as the English language had never attained to since the days of him who was to the age of Spenser what Shakspeare and Milton are to ours, the pattern and fount of poetry, Chaucer. Dryden is not afraid to class Spenser with Theocritus and Virgil, and to write that the *Shepherd's Calendar* is not to be matched in any language.† And this was at once recognized. The authorship of it, as has been said, was not formally acknowledged. Indeed, Mr. Collier remarks that seven years after its publication, and after it had gone through three or four separate editions, it was praised by a contemporary poet, George Whetstone, himself a friend of Spenser's, as the "reputed work of Sir Philip Sidney." But if it was officially a secret, it was an open secret, known to every one who cared to be well informed. It is possible that the free language used in it about ecclesiastical abuses was too much in sympathy with the growing fierceness and insolence of Puritan invective to be safely used by a poet who gave his name: and one of the reasons assigned for Burghley's dislike to Spenser is the praise bestowed in the *Shepherd's Calendar* on Archbishop Grindal, then in deep disgrace for resisting the suppression of the puritan prophesyings. But anonymous as it was, it had been placed under Sidney's protection; and it was at once warmly welcomed. It is not often that in those remote days we get evidence of the immediate effect of a book; but we have this evidence in Spenser's case. In this year, probably, after it was published, we find it spoken of by Philip Sidney, not without discriminating criticism, but as one of the few recent examples of poetry worthy to be named after Chaucer.

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* First published in 1559. It was a popular book, and was often re-edited.
† Dedication to Virgil.

> "I account the *Mirror of Magistrates* meetly furnished of beautiful parts; and in the Earl of Surrey's *Lyrics* many things tasting of birth, and worthy of a noble mind. The *Shepherd's Calendar* hath much poetry in his Eglogues: indeed worthy the reading if I be not deceived. That same framing of his style in an old rustic language I dare not allow, sith neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sanazar in Italian, did affect it. Besides these do I not remember to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed that have poetical sinews in them."

Sidney's patronage of the writer and general approval of the work doubtless had something to do with making Spenser's name known: but he at once takes a place in contemporary judgment which no one else takes, till the next decade of the century. In 1586, Webbe published his *Discourse of English Poetrie*. In this, the author of the *Shepherd's Calendar* is spoken of by the name given him by its Editor, E. K——, as the "new poet," just as, earlier in the century, the *Orlando Furioso* was styled the "nuova poesia;" and his work is copiously used to supply examples and illustrations of the critic's rules and observations. Webbe's review of existing poetry was the most comprehensive yet attempted: but the place which he gives to the new poet, whose name was in men's mouths, though, like the author of *In Memoriam*, he had not placed it on the title-page, was one quite apart.

> "This place [to wear the Laurel] have I purposely reserved for one, who, if not only, yet in my judgment principally, deserveth the title of the rightest English poet that ever I read: that is, the author of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, intituled to the worthy Gentleman Master Philip Sidney, whether it was Master Sp. or what rare scholar in Pembroke Hall soever, because himself and his friends, for what respect I know not, would not reveal it, I force not greatly to set down. Sorry I am that I cannot find none other with whom I might couple him in this catalogue in his rare gift of poetry: although one there is, though now long since seriously occupied in graver studies, Master Gabriel Harvey, yet as he was once his most special friend and fellow poet, so because he hath taken such pains not only in his Latin poetry . . . but also to reform our English verse . . . therefore will I adventure to set them together as two of the rarest wits and learnedest masters of poetry in England."

He even ventured to compare him favorably with Virgil.

"But now yet at the last hath England hatched up one poet of this sort, in my conscience comparable with the best in any respect: even Master Sp., author of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, whose travail in that piece of English poetry I think verily is so commendable, as none of equal judgment can yield him less praise for his excellent skill and skilful excellency showed forth in the same than they would to either Theocritus or Virgil, whom in mine opinion, if the coarseness of our speech (I mean the course of custom which he would not infringe) had been no more let unto him than their pure native tongues were unto them, he would have, if it might be, surpassed them."

The courtly author of the *Arte of English Poesie*, 1589, commonly cited as G. Puttenham, classes him with Sidney. And from this time his name occurs in every enumeration of English poetical writers, till he appears, more than justifying this early appreciation of his genius, as Chaucer's not unworthy successor, in the *Faerie Queene*. Afterwards, as other successful poetry was written, and the standards of taste were multiplied, this first enthusiastic reception cooled down. In James the First's time, Spenser's use of "old outworn words" is criticised as being no more "practical English" than Chaucer or Skelton; it is not "courtly" enough.* The success of the *Shepherd's Calendar* had also, apparently, substantial results, which some of his friends thought of with envy. They believed that it secured him high patronage, and opened to him a way to fortune. Poor Gabriel Harvey, writing in the year in which the *Shepherd's Calendar* came out, contrasts his own less favored lot, and his ill-repaid poetical efforts, with Colin Clout's good luck.

"But ever and ever, methinks, your great Catoes, *Ecquid erit pretii*, and our little Catoes, *Res age quæ prosunt*, make such a buzzing and ringing in my head, that I have little joy to animate and encourage either you or him to go forward, unless ye might make account of some certain ordinary wages, or at the least wise have your meat and drink for your day's works. As for myself, howsoever I have toyed and trifled heretofore, I am now taught, and I trust I shall shortly learn (no remedy, I must of mere necessity give you over in the plain field), to employ my travail and time wholly or chiefly on those studies and practices that carry, as they say, meat in their mouth, having evermore their eye upon the Title, *De pane lucrando*, and their hand upon their halfpenny. For I pray now what saith Mr. Cuddie, alias you know who, in the tenth Æglogue of the aforesaid famous new Calendar.

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"'The dapper ditties, that I wont devise
  To feed youths' fancy and the flocking fry,
Delighten much: what I the best for thy?
  They han the pleasure, I a sclender prize,
I beat the bush, the birds to them do fly.
  What good thereof to Cuddie can arise?'

"But Master Colin Clout is not everybody, and albeit his old companions, Master Cuddie and Master Hobinoll, be as little beholding to their mistress poetry as ever you wist: yet he, peradventure, by the means of her special favor, and some personal privilege, may haply live by *Dying Pelicans*, and purchase great lands and lordships with the money which his *Calendar* and *Dreams* have, and will afford him."

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* Bolton in Haslewood, ii. 249.

CHAPTER III.

SPENSER IN IRELAND.

[1580.]

In the first week of October, 1579, Spenser was at Leicester House, expecting "next week" to be despatched on Leicester's service to France. Whether he was sent or not, we do not know. Gabriel Harvey, writing at the end of the month, wagers that "for all his saying, he will not be gone over sea, neither this week nor the next." In one of the Æglogues (September) there are some lines which suggest, but do not necessarily imply, the experience of an eye-witness of the state of religion in a Roman Catholic country. But we can have nothing but conjecture whether at this time or any other Spenser was on the Continent. The *Shepherd's Calendar* was entered at Stationers' Hall, December 5, 1579. In April, 1580, as we know from one of his letters to Harvey, he was at Westminster. He speaks of the *Shepherd's Calendar* as published; he is contemplating the publication of other pieces, and then "he will in hand forthwith with his *Faerie Queene*," of which he had sent Harvey a specimen. He speaks especially of his *Dreams* as a considerable work.

> "I take best my *Dreams* should come forth alone, being grown by means of the Gloss (running continually in manner of a Paraphrase) full as great as my *Calendar*. Therein be some things excellently and many things wittily discoursed of E. K., and the pictures so singularly set forth and portrayed, as if Michael Angelo were there, he could (I think) nor amend the best, nor reprehend the worst. I know you would like them passing well."

It is remarkable that of a book so spoken of, as of the *Nine Comedies*, not a trace, as far as appears, is to be found. He goes on to speak with much satisfaction of another composition, which was probably incorporated, like the *Epithalamion Thamesis*, in his later work.

> "Of my *Stemmata Dudleiana*, and specially of the sundry Apostrophes therein, addressed you know to whom, much more advisement he had, than so lightly to send them abroad: now list, trust me (though I do never very well) yet, in mine own fancy, I never did better. *Veruntamen te sequor solum: nunquam vero assequar.*"

He is plainly not dissatisfied with his success, and is looking forward to more. But no one in those days could live by poetry. Even scholars, in spite of university endowments, did not hope to live by their scholarship; and the poet or man of letters only trusted that his work, by attracting the favor of the great, might open to him the door of advancement. Spenser was probably expecting to push his fortunes in some public employment under the patronage of two such powerful favorites as Sidney and his uncle Leicester. Spenser's heart was set on poetry: but what leisure he might have for it would depend on the course his life might take. To have hung on Sidney's protection, or gone with him as his secretary to the wars, to have been employed at home or abroad in Leicester's intrigues, to have stayed in London filling by Leicester's favor some government office, to have had his habits moulded and his thoughts affected by the brilliant and unscrupulous society of the court, or by the powerful and daring minds which were fast thronging the political and literary scene—any of these contingencies might have given his poetical faculty a different direction; nay, might have even abridged its exercise or suppressed it. But his life was otherwise ordered. A new opening presented itself. He had, and he accepted, the chance of making his fortune another way. And to his new manner of life, with its peculiar conditions, may be ascribed, not, indeed, the original idea of that which was to be his great work, but the circumstances under which the work was carried out, and which not merely colored it, but gave it some of its special and characteristic features.

That which turned the course of his career, and exercised a decisive influence, certainly on its events and fate, probably also on the turn of his thoughts and the shape and moulding of his work, was his migration to Ireland, and his settlement there for the greater part of the remaining eighteen years of his life. We know little more than the main facts of this change from the court and the growing intellectual activity of England, to the fierce and narrow interests of a cruel and unsuccessful struggle for colonization, in a country which was to England much what Algeria was to France some thirty years ago. Ireland, always unquiet, had become a serious danger to Elizabeth's Government. It was its "bleeding ulcer." Lord Essex's great colonizing scheme, with his unscrupulous severity, had failed. Sir Henry Sidney, wise, firm, and wishing to be just, had tried his hand as Deputy for the third time in the thankless charge of keeping order; he, too, after a short gleam of peace, had failed also. For two years Ireland had been left to the local administration, totally unable to heal its wounds, or cope with its disorders. And now the kingdom threatened to become a vantage-ground to the foreign enemy. In November, 1579, the Government turned their eyes on Arthur, Lord Grey of Wilton, a man of high character, and a soldier of distinction. He, or they, seem to have hesitated; or, rather, the hesitation was on both sides. He was not satisfied with many things in the policy of the Queen in England: his discontent had led him, strong Protestant as he was, to coquet with Norfolk and the partisans of Mary Queen of Scots, when England was threatened with a French marriage ten years before. His name stands among the forty nobles on whom Mary's friends counted.* And on the other hand, Elizabeth did not like him or trust him. For some time she refused to employ him. At length, in the summer of 1580, he was appointed to fill that great place which had wrecked the reputation and broken the hearts of a succession of able and high-spirited servants of the English Crown, the place of Lord-Deputy in Ireland. He was a man who was interested in the literary enterprise of the time. In the midst of his public employment in Holland he had been the friend and patron of George Gascoigne, who left a high reputation, for those days, as poet, wit, satirist, and critic. Lord Grey now took Spenser, the "new poet," the friend of Philip Sidney, to Ireland as his Secretary.

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* Froude, x. 158.

Spenser was not the only scholar and poet who about this time found public employment in Ireland. Names which appear in literary records, such as Warton's *History of English Poetry*, poets like Barnaby Googe and Ludovic Bryskett, reappear as despatch-writers or agents in the Irish State Papers. But one man came over to Ireland about the same time as Spenser whose fortunes were a contrast to his. Geoffrey Fenton was one of the numerous translators of the time. He had dedicated Tragical Tales from the French and Italian to Lady Mary Sidney, Guevara's Epistles from the Spanish to Lady Oxford, and a translation of Guicciardini to the Queen. About this time he was recommended by his brother to Walsingham for foreign service; he was soon after in Ireland: and in the summer of 1580 he was made Secretary to the Government. He shortly became one of the most important persons in the Irish administration. He corresponded confidentially and continually with Burghley and Walsingham. He had his eye on the proceedings of Deputies and Presidents, and reported freely their misdoings or their unpopularity. His letters form a considerable part of the Irish Papers. He became a powerful and successful public servant. He became Sir Geoffrey Fenton; he kept his high place for his life; he obtained grants and lands; and he was commemorated as a great personage in a pompous monument in St. Patrick's Cathedral. This kind of success was not to be Spenser's.

Lord Grey of Wilton was a man in whom his friends saw a high and heroic spirit. He was a statesman in whose motives and actions his religion had a dominant influence: and his religion—he is called by the vague name of Puritan—was one which combined a strong and doubtless genuine zeal for the truth of Christian doctrine and for purity of morals, with the deepest and deadliest hatred of what he held to be their natural enemy, the Antichrist of Rome. The "good Lord Grey," he was, if we believe his secretary, writing many years after this time, and when he was dead, "most gentle, affable, loving, and temperate; always known to be a most just, sincere, godly, and right noble man, far from sternness, far from unrighteousness." But the infelicity of his times bore hardly upon him, and Spenser admits, what is known otherwise, that he left a terrible name behind him. He was certainly a man of severe and unshrinking sense of duty, and like many great Englishmen of the time, so resolute in carrying it out to the end, that it reached, when he thought it necessary, to the point of ferocity. Naturally, he had enemies, who did not spare his fame; and Spenser, who came to admire and reverence him, had to lament deeply that "that good lord was blotted with the name of a bloody man," one who "regarded not the life of the queen's subjects no more than dogs, and had wasted and consumed all, so as now she had nothing almost left, but to reign in their ashes."

Lord Grey was sent over at a moment of the utmost confusion and danger. In July, 1579, Drury wrote to Burghley to stand firmly to the helm, for "that a great storm was at hand." The South of Ireland was in fierce rebellion, under the Earl of Desmond and Dr. Nicolas Sanders, who was acting under the commission of the Pope, and promising the assistance of the King of Spain; and a band of Spanish and Italian adventurers, unauthorized, but not uncountenanced by their Government, like Drake in the Indies, had landed with arms and stores, and had fortified a port at Smerwick, on the south-western coast of Kerry. The North was deep in treason, restless, and threatening to strike. Round Dublin itself, the great Irish Lords of the Pale, under Lord Baltinglass, in the summer of 1580, had broken into open insurrection, and were holding out a hand to the rebels of the South. The English garrison, indeed, small as they were, could not only hold their own against the ill-armed and undisciplined Irish bands, but could inflict terrible chastisement on the insurgents. The native feuds were turned to account; Butlers were set to destroy their natural enemies, the Geraldines; and the Earl of Ormond, their head, was appointed General in Munster, to execute English vengeance and his own on the lands and people of his rival Desmond. But the English chiefs were not strong enough to put down the revolt. "The conspiracy throughout Ireland," wrote Lord Grey, "is so general, that without a main force it will not be appeased. There are cold service and unsound dealing generally." On the 12th of August, 1580, Lord Grey landed, amid a universal wreck of order, of law, of mercy, of industry; and among his counsellors and subordinates the only remedy thought of was that of remorseless and increasing severity.

It can hardly be doubted that Spenser must have come over with him. It is likely that where he went his Secretary would accompany him. And if so, Spenser must soon have become acquainted with some of the scenes and necessities of Irish life. Within three weeks after Lord Grey's landing, he and those with him were present at the disaster of Glenmalure, a rocky defile near Wicklow, where the rebels enticed the English captains into a position in which an ambuscade had been prepared, after the manner of Red Indians in the last century, and of South African savages now, and where, in spite of Lord Grey's courage, "which could not have been bettered by Hercules," a bloody defeat was inflicted on his troops, and a number of distinguished officers were cut off. But Spenser was soon to see a still more terrible example of this ruthless warfare. It was necessary, above all things, to destroy the Spanish fort at Smerwick, in order to prevent the rebellion being fed from abroad : and in November, 1580, Lord Grey in person undertook the work. The incidents of this tragedy have been fully recorded, and they formed at the time a heavy charge against Lord Grey's humanity, and even his honor. In this instance Spenser must almost certainly have been on the spot. Years afterwards, in his *View of the State of Ireland*, he describes and vindicates Lord Grey's proceedings; and he does so, "being," as he writes, "as near them as any." And we have Lord Grey's own despatch to Queen Elizabeth, containing a full report of the tragical business. We have no means of knowing how Lord Grey employed Spenser, or whether he composed his own despatches. But from Spenser's position, the Secretary, if he had not some hand in the following vivid and forcible account of the taking of Smerwick,* must probably have been cognizant of it ; though there are some slight differences in the despatch, and in the account which Spenser himself wrote afterwards in his pamphlet on Irish Affairs.

After describing the proposal of the garrison for a parley, Lord Grey proceeds—

> "There was presently sent unto me one Alexandro, their camp master: he told me that certain Spaniards and Italians were there arrived upon fair speeches and great promises, which altogether vain and false they found ; and that it was no part of their intent to molest or take any government from your Majesty ; for proof, that they were ready to depart as they came and deliver into my hands the fort. Mine answer was, that for that I perceived their people to stand of two nations, Italian and Spanish, I would give no answer unless a Spaniard was likewise by. He presently went and returned with a Spanish captain. I then told the Spaniard that I knew their nation to have an absolute prince, one that was in good league and amity with your Majesty, which made me to marvell that any of his people should be found associate with them that went about to maintain rebels against you. . . . And taking it that it could not be his king's will, I was to know by whom and for what cause they were sent. His reply was that the king had not sent them, but that one John Martinez de Ricaldi, Governor for the king at Bilboa, had willed him to levy a band and repair with it to St. Andrews (Santander), and there to be directed by this their colonel here, whom he followed as a blind man, not knowing whither. The other avouched that they were all sent by the Pope for the defence of the *Catholica fede*. My answer was, that I would not greatly have marvelled if men being commanded by natural and absolute princes did sometimes take in hand wrong actions ; but that men, and that of account as some of them made show of, should be carried into unjust, desperate, and wicked actions, by one that neither from God or man could claim any princely power or empire but (was) indeed a detestable shaveling, the right Antichrist and general ambitious tyrant over all right principalities, and patron of the *Diabolica fede*—this I could not but greatly rest in wonder. Their fault therefore far to be aggravated by the vileness of their commander ; and that at my hands no condition or composition they were to expect, other than they should render me the fort, and yield their selves to my will for life or death. With this answer he departed ; after which there was one or two courses to and fro more, to have gotten a certainty for some of their lives : but finding that it would not be, the colonel himself about sunsetting came forth and

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* Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1574-1585. Mr. H. C. Hamilton's Pref. p. lxxi.-lxxiii. Nov. 12, 1580.

requested respite with surcease of arms till the next morning, and then he would give a resolute answer.

"Finding that to be but a gain of time to them, and a loss of the same for myself, I definitely answered I would not grant it, and therefore presently either that he took my offer or else return and I would fall to my business. He then embraced my knees simply putting himself to my mercy, only he prayed that for that night he might abide in the fort, and that in the morning all should be put into my hands. I asked hostages for the performance; they were given. Morning came; I presented my companies in battle before the fort, the colonel comes forth with ten or twelve of his chief gentlemen, trailing their ensigns rolled up, and presented them unto me with their lives and the fort. I sent straight certain gentlemen in, to see their weapons and armour laid down, and to guard the munition and victual there left for spoil. Then I put in certain bands, who straight fell to execution. There were six hundred slain. Munition and victual great store: though much wasted through the disorder of the soldier, which in that fury could not be helped. Those that I gave life unto, I have bestowed upon the captains and gentlemen whose service hath well deserved. . . . Of the six hundred slain, four hundred were as gallant and goodly personages as of any (soldiers) I ever beheld. So hath it pleased the Lord of Hosts to deliver your enemies into your Highnesses' hand, and so too as one only excepted, not one of yours is either lost or hurt."

Another account adds to this that "the Irish men and women were hanged, with an Englishman who had served Dr. Sanders, and two others whose arms and legs were broken for torture."

Such scenes as those of Glenmalure and Smerwice, terrible as they were, it might have been any one's lot to witness who lived himself in presence of the atrocious warfare of those cruel days, in which the ordinary exasperation of combatants was made more savage and unforgiving by religious hatred, and by the license which religious hatred gave to irregular adventure and the sanguinary repression of it. They were not confined to Ireland. Two years later the Marquis de Santa Cruz treated in exactly the same fashion a band of French adventurers, some eighty noblemen and gentlemen and two hundred soldiers, who were taken in an attempt on the Azores during a time of nominal peace between the crowns of France and Spain. In the Low Countries, and in the religious wars of France, it need not be said that even the "execution" at Smerwick was continually outdone; and it is what the Spaniards would of course have done to Drake if they had caught him. Nor did the Spanish Government complain of this treatment of its subjects, who had no legal commission.

But the change of scene and life to Spenser was much more than merely the sight of a disastrous skirmish and a capitulation without quarter. He had passed to an entirely altered condition of social life; he had passed from pleasant and merry England, with its comparative order and peace, its thriving homesteads and wealthy cities, its industry and magnificence—

"Eliza's blessed field,
That still with people, peace, and plenty flows——"

to a land, beautiful indeed, and alluring, but of which the only law was disorder, and the only rule failure. The Cambridge student, the follower of country life in Lancashire or Kent, the scholar discussing with Philip Sidney and corresponding with Gabriel Harvey about classical metres and English rimes; the shepherd poet, Colin Clout, delicately fashioning his innocent pastorals, his love complaints, or his dexterous panegyrics or satires; the courtier, aspiring to shine in the train of Leicester before the eyes of the great queen—found himself transplanted into a wild and turbulent savagery, where the elements of civil society hardly existed, and which had the fatal power of drawing into its own evil and lawless ways the English who came into contact with it. Ireland had the name and the framework of a Christian realm. It had its hierarchy of officers in Church and State, its Parliament, its representative of the Crown. It had its great earls and lords, with noble and romantic titles, its courts and councils and administration; the Queen's laws were there, and where they were acknowledged—which was not, however, everywhere—the English speech was current. But underneath this name and outside, all was coarse, and obstinately set against civilized order. There was nothing but the wreck and clashing of disintegrated customs, the lawlessness of fierce and ignorant barbarians, whose own laws had been destroyed, and who would recognize no other; the blood-feuds of rival septs; the ambitious and deadly treacheries of rival nobles, oppressing all weaker than themselves, and maintaining in waste and idleness their crowds of brutal retainers. In one thing only was there agreement, though not even in this was there union; and that was in deep, implacable hatred of their English masters. And with these English masters, too, amid their own jealousies and backbitings and mischief-making, their own bitter antipathies and chronic despair, there was only one point of agreement, and that was their deep scorn and loathing of the Irish.

This is Irish dealing with Irish, in Munster, at this time:

> "The Lord Roche kept a freeholder, who had eight plowlands, prisoner, and hand-locked him till he had surrendered seven plowlands and a half, on agreement to keep the remaining plowland free; but when this was done, the Lord Roche extorted as many exactions from that half-plowland as from any other half-plowland in his country. . . . And even the great men were under the same oppression from the greater: for the Earl of Desmond forcibly took away the Seneschal of Imokilly's corn from his own land, though he was one of the most considerable gentlemen in Munster." *

And this is English dealing with Irish:

> "Mr. Henry Sheffield asks Lord Burghley's interest with Sir George Carew, to be made his deputy at Leighlin, in place of Mr. Bagenall, who met his death under the following circumstances:
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> "Mr. Bagenall, after he had bought the barony of Odrone of Sir George Carew, could not be contented to let the Kavanaghs enjoy such lands as old Sir Peter Carew, young Sir Peter, and last, Sir George were content that they should have, but threatened to kill them wherever he could meet them. As it is now fallen out, about the last of November, one Henry Heron, Mr. Bagenall's brother-in-law, hav-

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* Cox, Hist. of Ireland, 354.

> ing lost four kine, making that his quarrel, he being accompanied with divers others to the number of twenty or thereabouts, by the procurement of his brother-in-law, went to the house of Mortagh Oge, a man seventy years old, the chief of the Kavanaghs, with their swords drawn: which the old man seeing, for fear of his life, sought to go into the woods, but was taken and brought before Mr. Heron, who charged him that his son had taken the cows. The old man answered that he could pay for them. Mr. Heron would not be contented, but bade his men kill him, he desiring to be brought for trial at the sessions. Further, the morrow after they went again into the woods, and there they found another old man, a servant of Mortagh Oge, and likewise killed him, Mr. Heron saying that it was because he would not confess the cows.
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> "On these murders, the sons of the old man laid an ambush for Mr. Bagenall; who, following them more upon will than with discretion, fell into their hands, and was slain with thirteen more. He had sixteen wounds above his girdle, and one of his legs cut off, and his tongue drawn out of his mouth and slit. There is not one man dwelling in all this country that was Sir George Carew's, but every man fled, and left the whole country waste; and so I fear me it will continue, now the deadly feud is so great between them." *

Something like this has been occasionally seen in our colonies towards the native races; but there it never reached the same height of unrestrained and frankly justified indulgence. The English officials and settlers knew well enough that the only thought of the native Irish was to restore their abolished customs, to recover their confiscated lands, to re-establish the crippled power of their chiefs; they knew that for this insurrection was ever ready, and that treachery would shrink from nothing. And to meet it, the English on the spot—all but a few who were denounced as unpractical sentimentalists for favoring an irreconcilable foe—could think of no way of enforcing order except by a wholesale use of the sword and the gallows. They could find no means of restoring peace except turning the rich land into a wilderness, and rooting out by famine those whom the soldier or the hangman had not overtaken. "No governor shall do any good here," wrote an English observer in 1581, "except he show himself a Tamerlane."

In a general accout, even contemporary, such statements might suggest a violent suspicion of exaggeration. We possess the means of testing it. The Irish State Papers of the time contain the ample reports and letters, from day to day, of the energetic and resolute Englishmen employed in council or in the field—men of business like Sir William Pelham, Sir Henry Wallop, Edward Waterhouse, and Geoffrey Fenton; daring and brilliant officers like Sir William Drury, Sir Nicholas Malby, Sir Warham St. Leger, Sir John Norreys, and John Zouch. These papers are the basis of Mr. Froude's terrible chapters on the Desmond rebellion, and their substance in abstract or abridgment is easily accessible in the printed calendars of the Record Office. They show that from first to last, in principle and practice, in council and in act, the Tamerlane system was believed in, and carried out without a trace of remorse or question as to its morality. "If

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* Irish Papers, March 29, 1587.

hell were open, and all the evil spirits were abroad," writes Walsingham's correspondent, Andrew Trollope, who talked about Tamerlane, "they could never be worse than these Irish rogues—rather dogs, and worse than dogs, for dogs do but after their kind, and they degenerate from all humanity." There is but one way of dealing with wild dogs or wolves; and accordingly the English chiefs insisted that this was the way to deal with the Irish. The state of Ireland, writes one, "is like an old cloak often before patched, wherein is now made so great a gash that all the world doth know that there is no remedy but to make a new." This means, in the language of another, "that there is no way to daunt these people but by the edge of the sword, and to plant better in their place, or rather, let them cut one another's throats." These were no idle words. Every page of these papers contains some memorandum of execution and destruction. The progress of a Deputy, or the President of a province, through the country is always accompanied with its tale of hangings. There is sometimes a touch of the grotesque. "At Kilkenny," writes Sir W. Drury, "the jail being full, we caused sessions immediately to begin. Thirty-six persons were executed, among which some good ones—two for treason, a blackamoor, and two witches by natural law, for that we found no law to try them by in this realm." It is like the account of some unusual kind of game in a successful bag. "If taking of cows and killing of kerne and churles had been worth advertising," writes Lord Grey to the Queen, "I would have had every day to have trouble your Highness." Yet Lord Grey protests in the same letter that he has never taken the life of any, however evil, who submitted. At the end of the Desmond outbreak, the chiefs in the different provinces send in their tale of death. Ormond complains of the false reports of his "slackness in but killing three men," whereas the number was more than 3000; and he sends in his "brief note" of his contribution to the slaughter, "598 persons of quality, besides 3000 or 4000 others, and 158 slain since his discharge." The end was that, as one of the chief actors writes, Sir Warham St. Leger, "Munster is nearly unpeopled by the murders done by the rebels, and the killings by the soldiers; 30,000 dead of famine in half a year, besides numbers that are hanged and killed. The realm," he adds, "was never in greater danger, or in like misery." But in the murderous work itself there was not much danger. "Our wars," writes Sir Henry Wallop, in the height of the struggle, "are but like fox-hunting." And when the English Government remonstrates against this system of massacre, the Lord-Deputy writes back that "he sorrows that pity for the wicked and evil should be enchanted into her Majesty."

And of this dreadful policy, involving, as the price of the extinction of Desmond's rebellion, the absolute desolation of the South and West of Ireland, Lord Grey came to be the deliberate and unfaltering champion. His administration lasted only two years, and in spite of his natural kindness of temper, which we need not doubt, it was, from the supposed necessities of his position, and the unwavering consent of all English opinions round him, a rule of extermination. No scruple ever crossed his mind, except that he had not been sufficiently uncompromising in putting first the religious aspect of the quarrel. "If Elizabeth had allowed him," writes Mr. Froude, "he would have now made a Mahommedan conquest of the whole island, and offered the Irish the alternative of the Gospel or the sword." With the terrible sincerity of a Puritan, he reproached himself that he had allowed even the Queen's commands to come before the "one article of looking to God's dear service." "I confess my sin," he wrote to Walsingham, "I have followed man too much," and he saw why his efforts had been in vain. "Baal's prophets and councillors shall prevail. I see it is so. I see it is just. I see it past help. I rest despaired." His policy of blood and devastation, breaking the neck of Desmond's rebellion, but failing to put an end to it, became at length more than the home Government could bear; and with mutual dissatisfaction he was recalled before his work was done. Amoug the documents relating to his explanations with the English Government, is one of which this is the abstract: "Declaration (Dec. 1583), by Arthur, Lord Grey of Wilton, to the Queen, showing the state of Ireland when he was appointed Deputy, with the services of his government, and the plight he left it in. 1485 chief men and gentlemen slain, not accounting those of meaner sort, nor yet executions by law, and killing of churles, which were innumerable."

This was the world into which Spenser was abruptly thrown, and in which he was henceforward to have his home. He first became acquainted with it as Lord Grey's Secretary in the Munster war. He himself in later days, with ample experience and knowledge, reviewed the whole of this dreadful history, its policy, its necessities, its results: and no more instructive document has come down to us from those times. But his description of the way in which the plan of extermination was carried out in Munster before his eyes may fittingly form a supplement to the language on the spot of those responsible for it.

> "*Eudox.* But what, then, shall be the conclusion of this war? . . .
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> "*Iren.* The end will I assure me be very short and much sooner than can be, in so great a trouble, as it seemeth, hoped for, although there should none of them fall by the sword nor be slain by the soldier: yet thus being kept from manurance and their cattle from running abroad, by this hard restraint they would quickly consume themselves, and devour one another. The proof whereof I saw sufficiently exampled in these late wars of Munster; for notwithstanding that the same was a most rich and plentiful country, full of corn and cattle that you would have thought they should have been able to stand long, yet ere one year and a half they were brought to such wretchedness as that any stony heart would have rued the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glynnes they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them; they looked like anatomies of death, they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eat the dead carrions, happy where they could find them, yea and one another soon after, insomuch that the very carcases they spared not to scrape out of their graves; and if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast for a time, yet not able long to continue there withal; that in a short space there were

none almost left, and a most populous and plentiful country suddenly left void of man and beast; yet sure in all that war there perished not many by the sword, but all by the extremity of famine which they themselves had wrought."

It is hardly surprising that Lord Grey's Secretary should share the opinions and the feeling of his master and patron. Certainly in his company and service, Spenser learned to look upon Ireland and the Irish with the impatience and loathing which filled most Englishmen; and it must be added with the same greedy eyes. In this new atmosphere, in which his life was henceforth spent, amid the daily talk of ravage and death, the daily scramble for the spoils of rebels and traitors, the daily alarms of treachery and insurrection, a man naturally learns hardness. Under Spenser's imaginative richness, and poetic delicacy of feeling, there appeared two features. There was a shrewd sense of the practical side of things: and there was a full share of that sternness of temper which belonged to the time. He came to Ireland for no romantic purpose; he came to make his fortune as well as he could: and he accepted the conditions of the place and scene, and entered at once into the game of adventure and gain which was the natural one for all English comers, and of which the prizes were lucrative offices and forfeited manors and abbeys. And in the native population and native interests he saw nothing but what called forth not merely antipathy, but deep moral condemnation. It was not merely that the Irish were ignorant, thriftless, filthy, debased, and loathsome in their pitiable misery and despair: it was that in his view, justice, truth, honesty had utterly perished among them, and therefore were not due to them. Of any other side to the picture he, like other good Englishmen, was entirely unconscious: he saw only on all sides of him the empire of barbarism and misrule which valiant and godly Englishmen were fighting to vanquish and destroy—fighting against apparent but not real odds. And all this was aggravated by the stiff adherence of the Irish to their old religion. Spenser came over with the common opinion of Protestant Englishmen, that they had at least in England the pure and undoubted religion of the Bible: and in Ireland he found himself face to face with the very superstition in its lowest forms which he had so hated in England. He left it plotting in England; he found it in armed rebellion in Ireland. Like Lord Grey, he saw in Popery the root of all the mischiefs of Ireland; and his sense of true religion, as well as his convictions of right, conspired to recommend to him Lord Grey's pitiless government. The opinion was everywhere—it was undisputed and unexamined—that a policy of force, direct or indirect, was the natural and right way of reducing diverging religions to submission and uniformity: that religious disagreement ought as a matter of principle to be subdued by violence of one degree or another. All wise and good men thought so, all statesmen and rulers acted so. Spenser found in Ireland a state of things which seemed to make this doctrine the simplest dictate of common sense.

In August, 1582, Lord Grey left Ireland, He had accepted his office with the utmost reluctance, from the known want of agreement between the Queen and himself as to policy. He had executed it in a way which greatly displeased the home Government. And he gave it up, with his special work, the extinction of Desmond's rebellion, still unaccomplished. In spite of the thousands slain, and a province made a desert, Desmond was still at large and dangerous. Lord Grey had been ruthlessly severe, and yet not successful. For months there had been an interchange of angry letters between him and the Government. Burghley, he complains to Walsingham, was "so heavy against him." The Queen and Burghley wanted order restored, bnt did not like either the expense of war, or the responsibility before other governments for the severity which their agents on the spot judged necessary. Knowing that he did not please, he had begun to solicit his recall before he had been a year in Ireland; and at length he was recalled, not to receive thanks, but to meet a strict, if not hostile, inquiry into his administration. Besides what had been on the surface of his proceedings to dissatisfy the Queen, there had been, as in the case of every Deputy, a continued underground stream of backbiting and insinuation going home against him. Spenser did not forget this, when in the *Faerie Queene* he shadowed forth Lord Grey's career in the adventures of Arthegal, the great Knight of Justice, met on his return home from his triumphs by the hags, Envy and Detraction, and the braying of the hundred tongues of the Blatant Beast. Irish lords and partisans, calling themselves loyal, when they could not get what they wanted, or when he threatened them for their insincerity or insolence, at once wrote to England. His English colleagues, civil and military, were his natural rivals or enemies, ever on the watch to spy out and report, if necessary to misrepresent, what was questionable or unfortunate in his proceedings. Permanent officials like Archbishop Adam Loftus the Chancellor, or Treasurer Wallop, or Secretary Fenton, knew more than he did; they corresponded directly with the ministers; they knew that they were expected to keep a strict watch on his expenditure; and they had no scruples to send home complaints against him behind his back, as they did against one another. A secretary in Dublin like Geoffrey Fenton is described as a moth in the garment of every Deputy. Grey himself complains of the underhand work; he cannot prevent "backbiters' report;" he has found of late "very suspicious dealing amongst all his best esteemed associates;" he "dislikes not to be informed of the charges against him." In fact, they were accusing him of one of the gravest sins of which a Deputy could be guilty; they were writing home that he was lavishing the forfeited estates among his favorites, under pretence of rewarding service, to the great loss and permanent damage of her Majesty's revenue; and they were forwarding plans for commissions to distribute these estates, of which the Deputy should not be a member.

He had the common fate of those who accepted great responsibilities under the Queen. He was expected to do very hard tasks with insufficient means, and to receive more blame where he failed than thanks where he succeeded. He had every one, English and Irish, against him in Ireland, and no one for him in England. He was driven to violence because he wanted strength; he took liberties with forfeitures belonging to the Queen because he had no other means of rewarding public services. It is not easy to feel much sympathy for a man who, brave and public-spirited as he was, could think of no remedy for the miseries of Ireland but wholesale bloodshed. Yet, compared with the resident officials who caballed against him, and who got rich on these miseries—the Wallops and Fentons of the Irish Council—this stern Puritan, so remorseless in what he believed to be his duty to his Queen and his faith, stands out as an honest and faithful public servant of a Government which seemed hardly to know its own mind, which vacillated between indulgence and severity, and which hampered its officers by contradictory policies, ignorant of their difficulties, and incapable of controlling the supplies for a costly and wasteful war. Lord Grey's strong hand, though incapable of reaching the real causes of Irish evils, undoubtedly saved the country at a moment of serious peril, and once more taught lawless Geraldines, and Eustaces, and Burkes the terrible lesson of English power. The work which he had half done in crushing Desmond was soon finished by Desmond's hereditary rival, Ormond; and under the milder, but not more popular, rule of his successor, the proud and irritable Sir John Perrot, Ireland had for a few years the peace which consisted in the absence of a definite rebellion, till Tyrone began to stir in 1595, and Perrot went back a disgraced man, to die a prisoner in the Tower.

Lord Grey left behind him unappeasable animosities, and returned to meet jealous rivals and an ill-satisfied mistress. But he had left behind one whose admiration and reverence he had won, and who was not afraid to take care of his reputation. Whether Spenser went back with his patron or not in 1582, he was from henceforth mainly resident in Ireland. Lord Grey's administration, and the principles on which it had been carried on, had made a deep impression on Spenser's mind. His first ideal had been Philip Sidney, the attractive and all-accomplished gentleman—

"The President
Of noblesse and of chevalrie,"—

and to the end the pastoral Colon Clout, for he ever retained his first poetic name, was faithful to his ideal. But in the stern Proconsul, under whom he had become hardened into a keen and resolute colonist, he had come in contact with a new type of character; a governor, under the sense of duty, doing the roughest of work in the roughest of ways. In Lord Grey he had this character, not as he might read of it in books, but acting out its qualities in present life, amid the unexpected emergencies, the desperate alternatives, the calls for instant decision, the pressing necessities and the anxious hazards, of a course full of uncertainty and peril. He had before his eyes, day by day, fearless, unshrinking determination, in a hateful and most unpromising task. He believed that he saw a living example of strength, manliness, and nobleness; of unsparing and unswerving zeal for order and religion, and good government; of single-hearted devotion to truth and right, and to the Queen. Lord Grey grew at last, in the poet's imagination, into the image and representative of perfect and masculine justice. When Spenser began to enshrine in a great allegory his ideas of human life and character, Lord Grey supplied the moral features, and almost the name, of one of its chief heroes. Spenser did more than embody his memory in poetical allegories. In Spenser's *View of the present State of Ireland*, written some years after Lord Grey's death, he gives his mature, and then, at any rate, disinterested approbation of Lord Grey's administration, and his opinion of the causes of its failure. He kindles into indignation when, "most untruly and maliciously, those evil tongues backbite and slander the sacred ashes of that most just and honorable personage, whose least virtue, of many most excellent, which abounded in his heroical spirit, they were never able to aspire unto."

Lord Grey's patronage had brought Spenser into the public service; perhaps that patronage, the patronage of a man who had powerful enemies, was the cause that Spenser's preferments, after Lord Grey's recall, were on so moderate a scale. The notices which we glean from indirect sources about Spenser's employment in Ireland are meagre enough, but they are distinct. They show him as a subordinate public servant, of no great account, but yet, like other public servants in Ireland, profiting, in his degree, by the opportunities of the time. In the spring following Lord Grey's arrival (March 22, 1581), Spenser was appointed Clerk of Decrees and Recognizances in the Irish Court of Chancery, retaining his place as Secretary to the Lord-Deputy, in which character his signature sometimes appears in the Irish Records, certifying State documents sent to England. This office is said by Fuller to have been a "lucrative" one. In the same year he received a lease of the Abbey and Manor of Enniscorthy, in the County of Wexford. Enniscorthy was an important post in the network of English garrisons, on one of the roads from Dublin to the South. He held it but for a short time. It was transferred by him to a citizen of Wexford, Richard Synot, an agent, apparently, of the powerful Sir Henry Wallop, the Treasurer; and it was soon after transferred by Synot to his patron, an official who secured to himself a large share of the spoils of Desmond's rebellion. Further, Spenser's name appears, in a list of persons (January, 1582), among whom Lord Grey had distributed some of the forfeited property of the rebels—a list sent home by him in answer to charges of waste and damage to the Queen's revenue, busily urged against him in Ireland by men like Wallop and Fenton, and readily listened to by English ministers like

Burghley, who complained that Ireland was a "gulf of consuming treasure." The grant was mostly to persons active in service, among others one to Wallop himself; and a certain number of smaller value to persons of Lord Grey's own household. There, among yeomen ushers, gentlemen ushers, gentlemen serving the Lord-Deputy, and Welshmen and Irishmen with uncouth names, to whom small gratifications had been allotted out of the spoil, we read—"the lease of a house in Dublin belonging to [Lord] Baltinglas for six years to come to Edmund Spenser, one of the Lord-Deputy's Secretaries, valued at 5*l.*" . . . "of a 'custodiam' of John Eustace's [one of Baltinglas' family] land of the Newland to Edmund Spenser, one of the Lord-Deputy's Secretaries." In July, 1586, when every one was full of the project for "planting" Munster, he was still in Dublin, for he addresses from thence a sonnet to Gabriel Harvey. In March, 158$\frac{8}{9}$, we find the following, in a list of officers on the establishment of the province of Munster, which the government was endeavoring to colonize from the west of England: "Lodovick Briskett, clerk to the council (at 20*l.* per annum), 13*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* (this is exercised by one Spenser, as deputy for the said Briskett, to whom (*i.e.*, Briskett) it was granted by patent 6 Nov. 25 Eliz. (1583)." (*Carew MSS.*) Bryskett was a man much employed in Irish business. He had been Clerk to the Irish Council, had been a correspondent of Burghley and Walsingham, and had aspired to be Secretary of State when Fenton obtained the poet: possibly in disappointment, he had retired, with an office which he exercised by deputy, to his lands in Wexford. He was a poet, and a friend of Spenser's: and it may have been by his interest with the dispensers of patronage that "one Spenser," who had been his deputy, succeeded to his office.

In this position Spenser was brought into communication with the powerful English chiefs on the Council of Munster, and also with the leading men among the Undertakers, as they were called, among whom more than half a million of acres of the escheated and desolate lands of the fallen Desmond were to be divided, on condition of each Undertaker settling on his estate a proportionate number of English gentlemen, yeomen, artisans and laborers with their families, who were to bring the ruined province into order and cultivation. The President and Vice-President of the Council were the two Norreys, John and Thomas, two of the most gallant of a gallant family. The project for the planting of Munster had been originally started before the rebellion, in 1568. It had been one of the causes of the rebellion; but now that Desmond was fallen, it was revived. It had been received in England with favor and hope. Men of influence and enterprise, Sir Christopher Hatton, Walsingham, Walter Ralegh, had embarked in it; and the government had made an appeal to the English country gentlemen to take advantage of this new opening for their younger sons, and to send them over at the head of colonies from the families of their tenants and dependants, to occupy a rich and beautiful land on easy terms of rent. In the Western Counties, north and south, the appeal had awakened interest. In the list of Undertakers are found Cheshire and Lancashire names—Stanley, Fleetwood, Molyneux; and a still larger number for Somerset, Devon and Dorset—Popham, Rogers, Coles, Ralegh, Chudleigh, Champernown. The plan of settlement was carefully and methodically traced out. The province was surveyed as well as it could be under great difficulties. Maps were made which Lord Burghley annotated. "Seigniories" were created of varying size, 12,000, 8000, 6000, 4000 acres, with corresponding obligations as to the number and class of farms and inhabitants in each. Legal science in England was to protect titles by lengthy patents and leases; administrative watchfulness and firmness were to secure them in Ireland. Privileges of trade were granted to the Undertakers: they were even allowed to transport coin out of England to Ireland: and a long respite was granted them before the Crown was to claim its rents. Strict rules were laid down to keep the native Irish out of the English lands and from intermarrying with the English families. In this partition, Seigniories were distributed by the Undertakers among themselves with the free carelessness of men dividing the spoil. The great people, like Hatton and Ralegh, were to have their two or three Seigniories: the County of Cork, with its nineteen Seigniories, is assigned to the gentlemen undertakers from Somersetshire. The plan was an ambitious and tempting one. But difficulties soon arose. The gentlemen undertakers were not in a hurry to leave England, even on a visit to their desolate and dangerous seigniories in Munster. The "planting" did not thrive. The Irish were inexhaustible in raising legal obstacles and in giving practical annoyance. Claims and titles were hard to discover or to extinguish. Even the very attainted and escheated lands were challenged by virtue of settlements made before the attainders. The result was that a certain number of Irish estates were added to the possessions of a certain number of English families. But Munster was not planted. Burghley's policy, and Walsingham's resolution, and Ralegh's daring inventiveness were alike baffled by the conditions of a problem harder than the peopling of America or the conquest of India. Munster could not be made English, After all its desolation, it reverted in the main to its Irish possessors.

Of all the schemes and efforts which accompanied the attempt, and the records of which fill the Irish State papers of those years, Spenser was the near and close spectator. He was in Dublin and on the spot, as Clerk of the Council of Munster. And he had become acquainted, perhaps, by this time, had formed a friendship, with Walter Ralegh, one of the most active men in Irish business, whose influence was rising wherever he was becoming known. Most of the knowledge which Spenser thus gathered, and of the impressions which a practical handling of Irish affairs had left on him, was embodied in his interesting work, written several years later—*A View of the present State of Ireland.* But his connection with Munster not unnaturally brought him also an accession of fortune. When Ralegh and the "Somersetshire men" were dividing among them the County of Cork, the Clerk of the Council was remembered by some of his friends. He was admitted among the Undertakers. His name appears in the list, among great statesmen and captains with their seigniories of 12,000 acres, as holding a grant of some 3000. It was the manor and castle of Kilcolman, a ruined house of the Desmonds, under the Galtee Hills. It appears to have been first assigned to another person.* But it came at last into Spenser's hands, probably in 1586; and henceforward this was his abode and his home.

Kilcolman Castle was near the high-road between Mallow and Limerick, about three miles from Buttevant and Doneraile, in a plain at the foot of the last western falls of the Galtee range, watered by a stream now called the Awbeg, but which he celebrates under the name of the Mulla. In Spenser's time it was probably surrounded with woods. The earlier writers describe it as a pleasant abode with fine views, and so Spenser celebrated its natural beauties. The more recent accounts are not so favorable. "Kilcolman," says the writer in Murray's Handbook, "is a small peel tower, with cramped and dark rooms, a form which every gentleman's house assumed in turbulent times. It is situated on the margin of a small lake, and, it must be confessed, overlooking an extremely dreary tract of country." It was in the immediate neighborhood of the wild country to the north, half forest, half bog, the wood and hill of Aharlo, or Arlo, as Spenser writes it which was the refuge and the "great fastness" of the Desmond rebellion. It was amid such scenes, amid such occupations, in such society and companionship, that the poet of the *Faerie Queene* accomplished as much of his work as was given him to do. In one of his later poems, he thus contrasts the peace of England with his own home:

"No wayling there nor wretchednesse is heard,
No bloodie issues nor no leprosies,
No griesly famine, nor no raging sweard,
No nightly bordrags [=border ravage], nor no hue and cries;
The shepheards there abroad may safely lie,
On hills and downes, withouten dread or daunger:
No ravenous wolves the good man's hope destroy,
Nor outlawes fell affray the forest raunger."

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* Carew MSS. Calendar, 1587, p. 449. Cf. Irish Papers; Calendar, 1587, p. 309, 450.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAERIE QUEENE—THE FIRST PART.

[1580–1590.]

THE *Faerie Queene* is heard of very early in Spenser's literary course. We know that in the beginning of 1580, the year in which Spenser went to Ireland, something under that title had been already begun and submitted to Gabriel Harvey's judgment; and that, among other literary projects, Spenser was intending to proceed with it. But beyond the mere name, we know nothing, at this time, of Spenser's proposed *Faerie Queene.* Harvey's criticisms on it tell us nothing of its general plan or its numbers. Whether the first sketch had been decided upon, whether the new stanza, Spenser's original creation, and its peculiar beauty and instrument, had yet been invented by him, while he had been trying experiments in metre in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, we have no means of determining, But he took the idea with him to Ireland; and in Ireland he pursued it and carried it out.

The first authentic account which we have of the composition of the *Faerie Queene* is in a pamphlet written by Spenser's friend and predecessor in the service of the Council of Munster, Ludowick Bryskett, and inscribed to Lord Grey of Wilton: a *Discourse of Civil Life*, published in 1606. He describes a meeting of friends at his cottage near Dublin, and a conversation that took place on the "ethical" part of moral philosophy, The company consisted of some of the principal Englishmen employed in Irish affairs, men whose names occur continually in the copious correspondence in the Rolls and at Lambeth. There was Long, the Primate of Armagh; there were Sir Robert Dillon, the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and Dormer, the Queen's Solicitor; and there were soldiers, like Thomas Norreys, then Vice-President of Munster, under his brother, John Norreys; Sir Warham Sentleger, on whom had fallen so much of the work in the South of Ireland, and who at last, like Thomas Norreys, fell in Tyrone's rebellion; Captain Christopher Carleil, Walsingham's son-in-law, a man who had gained great distinction on land and sea, not only in Ireland, but in the Low Countries, in France, and Carthagena and San Domingo; and Captain Nicholas Dawtry, the Seneschal of Clandeboy, in the troublesome Ulster country, afterwards "Captain" of Hampshire at the time of the Armada. It was a remarkable party. The date of this meeting must have been after the summer of 1584, at which time Long was made Primate, and before the beginning of 1588, when Dawtry was in Hampshire. The extract is so curious, as a picture of the intellectual and literary wants and efforts of the times, especially amid the disorders of Ireland, and as a statement of Spenser's purpose in his poem, that an extract from it deserves to be inserted, as it is given in Mr. Todd's *Life of Spenser*, and repeated in that by Mr. Hales.

"Herein do I greatly envie," writes Bryskett, "the happiness of the Italians, who have in their mother-tongue late writers that have, with a singular easie method taught all that Plato and Aristotle have confusedly or obscurely left written. Of which, some I have begun to reade with no small delight; as Alexander Piccolomini, Gio. Baptista Giraldi, and Guazzo; all three having written upon the Ethick part of Morall Philosophie both exactly and perspicuously. And would God that some of our countrimen would shew themselves so wel affected to the good of their countrie (whereof one principall and most important part consisteth in the instructing men to vertue), as to set downe in English the precepts of those parts of Morall Philosophie, whereby our youth might, without spending so much time as the learning of those other languages require, speedily enter into the right course of vertuous life.

"In the meane while I must struggle with those bookes which I vnderstand and content myselfe to plod upon them, in hope that God (who knoweth the sincerenesse of my desire) will be pleased to open my vnderstanding, so as I may reape the profit of my reading, which I trauell for. Yet is there *a gentleman in this company*, whom I have had often a purpose to intreate, that as his liesure might serue him, he would vouchsafe to spend some time with me to instruct me in some hard points which I cannot of myselfe vnderstand; *knowing him to be not onely perfect in the Greek tongue, but also very well read in Philosophie, both morall and naturall.* Neuertheless such is my bashfulness, as I neuer yet durst open my mouth to disclose this my desire unto him, though I have not wanted some hartning thereunto from himselfe. For of loue and kindnes to me, *he encouraged me long sithens to follow the reading of the Greeke tongue, and offered me his helpe to make me understand it.* But now that so good an opportunitie is offered vnto me, to satisfie in some sort my desire; I thinke I should commit a great fault, not to myselfe alone, but to all this company, if I should not enter my request thus farre, as to moue him to spend this time which we have now destined to familiar discourse and conuersation, in declaring unto us the great benefits which men obtaine by the knowledge of Morall Philosophie, and in making us to know what the same is, what be the parts thereof, whereby vertues are to be distinguished from vices; and finally, that he will be pleased to run ouer in such order as he shall thinke good, such and so many principles and rules thereof as shall serue not only for my better instruction, but also for the contentment and satisfaction of you al. For I nothing doubt, but that euery one of you will be glad to heare so profitable a discourse and thinke the time very wel spent wherein so excellent a knowledge shal be reuealed unto you, from which euery one may be assured to gather some fruit as wel as myselfe.

"Therefore (said I), turning myselfe to *M. Spenser*, It is you, sir, to whom it pertaineth to shew yourselfe courteous now unto vs all and to make vs all beholding unto you for the pleasure and profit which we shall gather from your speeches, if you shall vouchsafe to open unto vs the goodly cabinet in which this excellent treasure of vertues lieth locked up from the vulgar sort. And thereof in the behalfe of all as for myselfe, I do most earnestly intreate you not to say vs nay. Vnto which wordes of mine euery man applauding most with like words of request, and the rest with gesture and countenances expressing as much, *M. Spenser* answered in this maner:

"'Though it may seeme hard for me to refuse the request made by you all, whom euery one alone, I should for many respects be willing to gratifie; yet as the case standeth, I doubt not but withe the consent of the most part of you, I shall be excused at this time of this taske which would be laid vpon me; for sure I am, that it is not vnknowne vnto you, that I haue alreedy vndertaken a work tending to the same effect, which is in *heroical verse* under the title of a *Faerie Queene* to represent all the moral vertues, assigning to euery vertue a Knight to be the patron and defender of the same, in whose actions and feates of arms and chiualry the operations of that vertue, whereof he is the protector, are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beaten down and ouercome. Which work, *as I have already well entred into*, if God shall please to spare me life that I may finish it according to my mind, your wish (*M. Bryskett*)

> will be in some sort accomplished, though perhaps not so effectually as you could desire. And the same may very well serue for my excuse, if at this time I craue to be forborne in this your request, since any discourse, that I might make thus on the sudden in such a subject would be but simple, and little to your satisfactions. For it would require good aduisement and premeditation for any man to vndertake the declaration of these points that you have proposed, containing in effect the Ethicke part of Morall Philosophie. Whereof since I haue taken in hand to discourse at large in my poeme before spoken, I hope the expectation of that work may serue to free me at this time from speaking in that matter, notwithstanding your motion and all your entreaties. But I will tell you how I thinke by himselfe he may very well excuse my speech, and yet satisfie all you in this matter. I haue seene (as he knoweth) a translation made by himselfe out of the Italian tongue of a dialogue comprehending all the Ethick part of Moral Philosophy written by one of those three he formerly mentioned, and that is by *Giraldi* vnder the title of a Dialogue of Ciuil life. If it please him to bring us forth that translation to be here read among vs, or otherwise to deliuer to us, as his memory may serue him, the contents of the same; he shal (I warrant you) satisfie you all at the ful, and himselfe wil haue no cause but to thinke the time well spent in reuiewing his labors, especially in the company of so many his friends, who may thereby reape much profit, and the translation happily fare the better by some mending it may receiue in the perusing, as all writings else may do by the often examination of the same. Neither let it trouble him that I so turne ouer to him againe the taske he would haue put me to; for it falleth out fit for him to verifie the principall of all this Apologie, euen now made for himselfe; because thereby it will appeare that he hath not withdrawne himselfe from seruice of the state to liue idle or wholly priuate to himselfe, but hath spent some time in doing that which may greatly benefit others, and hath serued not a little to the bettering of his owne mind, and increasing of his knowledge; though he for modesty pretend much ignorance, and pleade want in wealth, much like some rich beggars, who either of custom, or for couetousnes, go to begge of others those things whereof they haue no want at home.'
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> "With this answer of *M. Spensers* it seemed that all the company were wel satisfied, for after some few speeches whereby they had shewed an extreme longing after his worke of the *Fairie Queene*, *whereof some parcels had been by some of them seene*, they all began to presse me to produce my translation mentioned by *M. Spenser* that it might be perused among them; or else that I should (as near as I could) deliuer unto them the contents of the same, supposing that my memory would not much faile me in a thing so studied and advisedly set downe in writing as a translation must be."

A poet at this time still had to justify his employment by presenting himself in the character of a professed teacher of morality, with a purpose as definite and formal, though with a different method, as the preacher in the pulpit. Even with this profession, he had to encounter many prejudices, and men of gravity and wisdom shook their heads at what they thought his idle trifling. But if he wished to be counted respectable, and to separate himself from the crowd of foolish or licentious rhymers, he must intend distinctly, not merely to interest, but to instruct, by his new and deep conceits. It was under the influence of this persuasion that Spenser laid down the plan of the *Faerie Queene*. It was, so he proposed to himself, to be a work on moral, and, if time were given him, political philosophy, composed with as serious a didactic aim as any treatise or sermon in prose. He deems it necessary to explain and excuse his work by claiming for it this design. He did not venture to send the *Faerie Queene* into the world without also telling the world its moral meaning and bearing. He cannot trust it to tell its own story or suggest its real drift. In the letter to Sir W

Ralegh, accompanying the first portion of it, he unfolds elaborately the sense of his allegory, as he expounded it to his friends in Dublin. "To some," he says "I know this method will seem displeasant, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly by way of precept, or sermoned at large, as they use, than thus cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devises." He thought that Homer and Virgil and Ariosto had thus written poetry to teach the world moral virtue and political wisdom. He attempted to propitiate Lord Burghley, who hated him and his verses, by setting before him, in a dedication sonnet, the true intent of his—

"Idle rimes;
The labour of lost time and wit unstaid;
Yet if their deeper sense he inly weighed,
And the dim veil, with which from common view
Their fairer parts are hid, aside be laid,
Perhaps not vain they may appear to you."

In earlier and in later times, men do not apologize for being poets; and Spenser himself was deceived in giving himself credit for this direct purpose to instruct, when he was really following the course marked out by his genius. But he only conformed to the curious utilitarian spirit which pervaded the literature of the time. Readers were supposed to look everywhere for a moral to be drawn, or a lesson to be inculcated, or some practical rules to be avowedly and definitely deduced; and they could not yet take in the idea that the exercise of the speculative and imaginative faculties may be its own end, and may have indirect influences and utilities even greater than if it was guided by a conscious intention to be edifying and instructive.

The first great English poem of modern times, the first creation of English imaginative power since Chaucer, and like Chaucer so thoroughly and characteristically English, was not written in England. Whatever Spenser may have done to it before he left England with Lord Grey, and whatever portions of earlier composition may have been used and worked up into the poem as it went on, the bulk of the *Faerie Queene*, as we have it, was composed in what to Spenser and his friends was almost a foreign land—in the conquered and desolated wastes of wild and barbarous Ireland. It is a feature of his work on which Spenser himself dwells. In the verses which usher in his poem, addressed to the great men of Elizabeth's court, he presents his work to the Earl of Ormond, as

"The wild fruit which salvage soil hath bred;
Which being through long wars left almost waste,
With brutish barbarism is overspread;"—

and in the same strain to Lord Grey, he speaks of his "rude rimes, the which a rustic muse did weave, in salvage soil." It is idle to speculate what difference of form the *Faerie Queene* might have received, if the design had been carried out in the peace of England and in the society of London. But it is certain that the scene of trouble and danger in which it grew up greatly affected it. This may possibly account, though it is questionable, for the looseness of texture and the want of accuracy and finish which is sometimes to be seen in it. Spenser was a learned poet; and his poem has the character of the work of a man of wide reading, but without books to verify or correct. It cannot be doubted that his life in Ireland added to the force and vividness with which Spenser wrote. In Ireland he had before his eyes continually the dreary world which the poet of knight-errantry imagines. There men might in good truth travel long through wildernesses and "great woods" given over to the outlaw and the ruffian. There the avenger of wrong need seldom want for perilous adventure and the occasion for quelling the oppressor. There the armed and unrelenting hand of right was but too truly the only substitute for law. There might be found, in most certain and prosaic reality, the ambushes, the disguises, the treacheries, the deceits and temptations, even the supposed witchcrafts and enchantments, against which the fairy champions of the virtues have to be on their guard. In Ireland, Englishmen saw, or at any rate thought they saw, a universal conspiracy of fraud against righteousness, a universal battle going on between error and religion, between justice and the most insolent selfishness. They found there every type of what was cruel, brutal, loathsome. They saw everywhere men whose business it was to betray and destroy, women whose business it was to tempt and ensnare and corrupt. They thought that they saw too, in those who waged the Queen's wars, all forms of manly and devoted gallantry, of noble generosity, of gentle strength, of knightly sweetness and courtesy. There were those, too, who failed in the hour of trial; who were the victims of temptation or of the victorious strength of evil. Besides the open or concealed traitors—the Desmonds, and Kildares, and O'Neales—there were the men who were entrapped and overcome, and the men who disappointed hopes, and became recreants to their faith and loyalty; like Sir William Stanley, who, after a brilliant career in Ireland, turned traitor and apostate, and gave up Deventer and his Irish bands to the King of Spain.

The realities of the Irish wars and of Irish social and political life gave a real subject, gave body and form to the allegory. There in actual flesh and blood were enemies to be fought with by the good and true. There in visible fact were the vices and falsehoods, which Arthur and his companions were to quell and punish. There in living truth were *Sansfoy*, and *Sansloy*, and *Sansjoy*; there were *Orgoglio* and *Grantorto*, the witcheries of *Acrasia* and *Phædria*, the insolence of *Briana* and *Crudor*. And there, too, were real Knights of goodness and the Gospel—Grey, and Ormond, and Ralegh, the Norreyses, St. Leger, and Maltby—on a real mission from Gloriana's noble realm to destroy the enemies of truth and virtue.

The allegory bodies forth the trials which beset the life of man in all conditions and at all times. But Spenser could never have seen in England such a strong and perfect image of the allegory itself—with the wild wanderings of its personages, its daily chances of battle and danger, its hairbreadth escapes, its strange encounters, its prevailing anarchy and violence, its normal absence of order and law—as he had continually and customarily before him in Ireland. "The curse of God was so great," writes John Hooker, a contemporary, "and the land so barren both of man and beast, that whosoever did travel from one end to the other of all Munster, even from Waterford to Smerwick, about six-score miles, he should not meet man, woman, or child, saving in cities or towns, nor yet see any beast, save foxes, wolves, or other ravening beasts." It is the desolation through which Spenser's knights pursue their solitary way, or join company as they can. Indeed, to read the same writer's account, for instance, of Ralegh's adventures with the Irish chieftains, his challenges and single combats, his escapes at fords and woods, is like reading bits of the *Faerie Queene* in prose. As Spenser chose to write of knight-errantry, his picture of it has doubtless gained in truth and strength by his very practical experience of what such life as he describes must be. The *Faerie Queene* might almost be called the Epic of the English wars in Ireland under Elizabeth, as much as the Epic of English virtue and valor at the same period.

At the Dublin meeting described by Bryskett, some time later than 1584, Spenser had already "well entered into" his work. In 1589 he came to England, bringing with him the first three books; and early in 1590 they were published. Spenser himself has told us the story of this first appearance of the *Faerie Queene*. The person who discovered the extraordinary work of genius which was growing up amid the turbulence and misery and despair of Ireland, and who once more brought its author into the centre of English life, was Walter Ralegh. Ralegh had served through much of the Munster war. He had shown in Ireland some of the characteristic points of his nature, which made him at once the glory and shame of English manhood. He had begun to take a prominent place in any business in which he engaged. He had shown his audacity, his self-reliance, his resource, and some signs of that boundless but prudent ambition which marked his career. He had shown that freedom of tongue, that restless and high-reaching inventiveness, and that tenacity of opinion, which made him a difficult person for others to work with. Like so many of the English captains, he hated Ormond, and saw in his feud with the Desmonds the real cause of the hopeless disorder of Munster. But also he incurred the displeasure and suspicion of Lord Grey, who equally disliked the great Irish Chief, but who saw in the "plot" which Ralegh sent to Burghley for the pacification of Munster, an adventurer's impracticable and self-seeking scheme. "I must be plain," he writes, "I like neither his carriage nor his company." Ralegh had been at Smerwick: he had been in command of one of the bands put in by Lord Grey to do the execution, On Lord Grey's departure he had become one of the leading persons among the undertakers for the planting of Munster. He had secured for himself a large share of the Desmond lands. In 1587, an agreement among the undertakers assigned to Sir Walter Ralegh, his associates and tenants, three seigniories of 12,000 acres apiece, and one of 6000, in Cork and Waterford. But before Lord Grey's departure Ralegh had left Ireland, and had found the true field for his ambition in the English court. From 1582 to 1589 he had shared with Leicester and Hatton, and afterwards with Essex, the special favor of the Queen. He had become Warden of the Stannaries and Captain of the Guard. He had undertaken the adventure of founding a new realm in America under the name of Virginia. He had obtained grants of monopolies, farms of wines, Babington's forfeited estates. His own great ship, which he had built, the Ark Ralegh, had carried the flag of the High Admiral of England in the glorious but terrible summer of 1588. He joined in that tremendous sea-chase from Plymouth to the North Sea when, as Spenser wrote to Lord Howard of Effingham—

> "Those huge castles of Castilian King,
> That vainly threatened kingdoms to displace,
> Like flying doves, ye did before you chase."

In the summer of 1589, Ralegh had been busy, as men of the sea were then, half Queen's servants, half buccaneers, in gathering the abundant spoils to be found on the high seas; and he had been with Sir John Norreys and Sir Francis Drake in a bootless but not unprofitable expedition to Lisbon. On his return from the Portugal voyage his court fortunes underwent a change. Essex, who had long scorned "that knave Ralegh," was in the ascendant. Ralegh found the Queen, for some reason or another, and reasons were not hard to find, offended and dangerous. He bent before the storm. In the end of the summer of 1589, he was in Ireland, looking after his large seigniories, his lawsuits with the old proprietors, his castle at Lismore, and his schemes for turning to account his woods for the manufacture of pipe staves for the French and Spanish wine trade.

He visited Spenser, who was his neighbor at Kilcolman, and the visit led to important consequences. The record of it and of the events which followed is preserved in a curious poem of Spenser's written two or three years later, and of much interest in regard to Spenser's personal history. Taking up the old pastoral form of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, with the familiar rustic names of the swains who figured in its dialogues—Hobbinol, Cuddie, Rosalind, and his own Colin Clout—he described, under the usual poetical disguise, the circumstances which once more took him back from Ireland to the court. The court was the place to which all persons wishing to push their way in the world were attracted. It was not only the centre of all power, the source of favors and honors, the seat of all that swayed the destiny of the nation. It was the home of refinement, and wit, and cultivation; the place where eminence of all kinds was supposed to be collected, and to which all ambitions, literary as much as political, aspired. It was not only a royal court; it was also a great club. Spenser's poem shows us how he had sped there, and the impressions made on his mind by a closer view of the persons and the ways of that awful and dazzling scene, which exercised such a spell upon Englishmen, and which seemed to combine or concentrate in itself the glory and the goodness of heaven, and all the baseness and malignity of earth. The occasion deserved a full celebration; it was indeed a turning-point in his life, for it led to the publication of the *Faerie Queene*, and to the immediate and enthusiastic recognition by the Englishmen of the time of his unrivalled pre-eminence as a poet. In this poetical record, *Colin Clout's come home again*, containing in it history, criticism, satire, personal recollections, love passages, wc have the picture of his recollections of the flush and excitement of those months which saw the first appearance of the *Faerie Queene*. He describes the interruption of his retired and, as he paints it, peaceful and pastoral life in his Irish home, by the appearance of Ralegh, the "Shepherd of the Ocean," from "the main sea deep." They may have been thrown together before. Both had been patronized by Leicester. Both had been together at Smerwick, and probably in other passages of the Munster war; both had served under Lord Grey, Spenser's master, though he had been no lover of Ralegh. In their different degrees, Ralegh with his two or three seigniories of half a county, and Spenser with his more modest estate, they were embarked in the same enterprise, the plantation of Munster. But Ralegh now appeared before Spenser in all the glory of a brilliant favorite—the soldier, the explorer, the daring sea-captain, the founder of plantations across the ocean, and withal the poet, the ready and eloquent discourser, the true judge and measurer of what was great or beautiful.

The time, too, was one at once of excitement and repose. Men felt as they feel after a great peril, a great effort, a great relief; as the Greeks did after Salamis and Platæa, as our fathers did after Waterloo. In the struggle in the Channel with the might of Spain, England had recognized its force and its prospects. One of those solemn moments had just passed when men see before them the course of the world turned one way, when it might have been turned another. All the world had been looking out to see what would come to pass; and nowhere more eagerly than in Ireland. Every one, English and Irish alike, stood agaze to ' see how the game would be played." The great fleet, as it drew near, "worked wonderfully uncertain yet calm humors in the people, not daring to disclose their real intention." When all was decided, and the distressed ships were cast away on the western coast, the Irish showed as much zeal as the English in fulfilling the orders of the Irish council, to "apprehend and execute all

Spaniards found there of what quality soever." These were the impressions under which the two men met. Ralegh, at the moment, was under a cloud, In the poetical fancy picture set before us—

> " His song was all a lamentable lay
> Of great unkindnesse, and of usage hard,
> Of Cynthia the Ladie of the Sea,
> Which from her presence faultlesse him debard.
> And ever and anon, with singults rife,
> He cryed out, to make his undersong;
> Ah! my loves queene, and goddesse of my life,
> Who shall me pittie, when thou doest me wrong?"

At Kilcolman, Ralegh became acquainted with what Spenser had done of the *Faerie Queene*. His rapid and clear judgment showed him how immeasurably it rose above all that had yet been produced under the name of poetry in England. That alone is sufficient to account for his eager desire that it should be known in England. But Ralegh always had an eye to his own affairs, marred as they so often were by ill-fortune and his own mistakes; and he may have thought of making his peace with Cynthia by reintroducing at Court the friend of Philip Sidney, now ripened into a poet not unworthy of Gloriana's greatness. This is Colon Clout's account:

> " When thus our pipes we both had wearied well,
> (Quoth he) and each an end of singing made,
> He gan to cast great lyking to my lore,
> And great dislyking to my lucklesse lot,
> That banisht had my selfe, like wight forlore,
> Into that waste, where I was quite forgot.
> The which to leave, thenceforth he counseld mee,
> Unmeet for man, in whom was aught regardfull,
> And wend with him, his Cynthia to see:
> Whose grace was great, and bounty most rewardfull;
> Besides her peerlesse skill in making well,
> And all the ornaments of wondrous wit,
> Such as all womankynd did far excell,
> Such as the world admyr'd, and praised it.
> So what with hope of good, and hate of ill,
> He me perswaded forth with him to fare.
> Nought tooke I with me, but mine oaten quill:
> Small needments else need shepheard to prepare.
> So to the sea we came; the sea, that is
> A world of waters heaped up on hie,
> Rolling like mountaines in wide wildernesse,
> Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse crie."

This is followed by a spirited description of a sea-voyage, and of that empire of the seas in which, since the overthrow of the Armada, England and England's mistress were now claiming to be supreme, and of which Ralegh was one of the most active and distinguished officers:

> " And yet as ghastly dreadfull, as it seemes,
> Bold men, presuming life for gaine to sell,
> Dare tempt that gulf, and in those wandring stremes
> Seek waies unknowne, waies leading down to hell.

For, as we stood there waiting on the strond,
Behold! an huge great vessell to us came,
Dauncing upon the waters back to lond,
As if it scornd the daunger of the same;
Yet was it but a wooden frame and fraile,
Glewed togither with some subtile matter.
Yet had it armes and wings, and head and taile,
And life to move it selfe upon the water.
Strange thing! how bold and swift the monster was,
That neither car'd for wind, nor haile, nor raine,
Nor swelling waves, but thorough them did passe
So proudly, that she made them roare againe.
The same aboord us gently did receave,
And without harme us farre away did beare,
So farre that land, our mother, us did leave,
And nought but sea and heaven to us appeare.
Then hartlesse quite, and full of inward feare,
That shepheard I besought to me to tell,
Under what skie, or in what world we were,
In which I saw no living people dwell.
Who, me recomforting all that he might,
Told me that that same was the Regiment
Of a great Shepheardesse, that Cynthia hight,
His liege, his Ladie, and his lifes Regent."

This is the poetical version of Ralegh's appreciation of the treasure which he had lighted on in Ireland, and of what he did to make it known to the admiration and delight of England. He returned to the Court, and Spenser with him. Again, for what reason we know not, he was received into favor. The poet, who accompanied him, was brought to the presence of the lady, who saw herself in "various mirrors"—Cynthia, Gloriana, Belphœbe, as she heard him read portions of the great poem which was to add a new glory to her reign.

"The Shepheard of the Ocean (quoth he)
Unto that Goddesse grace me first enhanced,
And to mine oaten pipe enclin'd her eare,
That she thenceforth therein gan take delight;
And it desir'd at timely houres to heare,
All were my notes but rude and roughly dight;
For not by measure of her owne great mynde,
And wondrous worth, she mott my simple song,
But joyd that country shepheard ought could fynd
Worth harkening to, emongst the learned throng."

He had already too well caught the trick of flattery—flattery in a degree almost inconceivable to us—which the fashions of the time, and the Queen's strange self-deceit, exacted from the loyalty and enthusiasm of Englishmen. In that art Ralegh was only too apt a teacher. Colin Clout, in his story of his recollections of the Court, lets us see how he was taught to think and to speak there:

"But if I her like ought on earth might read,
I would her lyken to a crowne of lillies,
Upon a virgin brydes adorned head,
With Roses dight and Goolds and Daffadillies;

> Or like the circlet of a Turtle true,
> In which all colours of the rainbow bee;
> Or like faire Phebes garlond shining new,
> In which all pure perfection one may see.
> But vaine it is to thinke, by paragone
> Of earthly things, to judge of things divine:
> Her power, her mercy, her wisdome, none
> Can deeme, but who the Godhead can define.
> Why then do I, base shepheard, bold and blind,
> Presume the things so sacred to prophane?
> More fit it is t' adore, with humble mind,
> The image of the heavens in shape humane."

The Queen, who heard herself thus celebrated, celebrated not only as a semi-divine person, but as herself unrivalled in the art of "making" or poetry—"her peerless skill in making well"—granted Spenser a pension of 50*l.* a year, which, it is said, the prosaic and frugal Lord Treasurer, always hard-driven for money and not caring much for poets, made difficulties about paying. But the new poem was not for the Queen's ear only. In the registers of the Stationers' Company occurs the following entry:

> "Primo die Decembris [1589].
> "Mr. Ponsonbye—Entered for his Copye, a book intytuled the *fayrye Queene* dysposed into xij bookes &c., authorysed under thandes of the Archbishop of Canterbery and bothe the Wardens. vjd."

Thus, between pamphlets of the hour—an account of the Arms of the City Companies on one side, and the last news from France on the other—the first of our great modern English poems was licensed to make its appearance. It appeared soon after, with the date of 1590. It was not the twelve books, but only the first three. It was accompanied and introduced, as usual, by a great host of commendatory and laudatory sonnets and poems. All the leading personages at Elizabeth's court were appealed to; according to their several tastes or their relations to the poet, they are humbly asked to befriend, or excuse, or welcome his poetical venture. The list itself is worth quoting: Sir Christopher Hatton, then Lord Chancellor, the Earls of Essex, Oxford, Northumberland, Ormond, Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord Grey of Wilton, Sir Walter Ralegh, Lord Burghley, the Earl of Cumberland, Lord Hunsdon, Lord Buckhurst, Walsingham, Sir John Norris, President of Munster. He addresses Lady Pembroke, in remembrance of her brother, that "heroic spirit," "the glory of our days,"

> "Who first my Muse did lift out of the floor,
> To sing his sweet delights in lowly lays."

And he finishes with a sonnet to Lady Carew, one of Sir John Spencer's daughters, and another to "all the gracious and beautiful ladies of the Court," in which "the world's pride seems to be gathered." There come also congratulations and praises for himself. Ralegh addressed to him a fine but extravagant sonnet, in which he imagined

Petrarch weeping for envy at the approval of the *Faerie Queene*, while "Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse," and even Homer trembled for his fame. Gabriel Harvey revoked his judgment on the *Elvish Queen*, and, not without some regret for less ambitious days in the past, cheered on his friend in his noble enterprise. Gabriel Harvey has been so much, and not without reason, laughed at, and yet his verses welcoming the *Faerie Queene* are so full of true and warm friendship, and of unexpected refinement and grace, that it is but just to cite them. In the eyes of the world he was an absurd personage: but Spenser saw in him perhaps his worthiest and trustiest friend. A generous and simple affection has almost got the better in them of pedantry and false taste.

"Collyn, I see, by thy new taken taske,
  Some sacred fury hath enricht thy braynes,
That leades thy muse in haughty verse to maske,
  And loath the layes that longs to lowly swaynes;
That lifts thy notes from Shepheardes unto kinges:
So like the lively Larke that mounting singes.

"Thy lovely Rosolinde seemes now forlone,
  And all thy gentle flockes forgotten quight:
Thy chaunged hart now holdes thy pypes in scorne,
  Those prety pypes that did thy mates delight;
Those trusty mates, that loved thee so well;
Whom thou gav'st mirth, as they gave thee the bell.

"Yet, as thou earst with thy sweete roundelayes
  Didst stirre to glee our laddes in homely bowers;
So moughtst thou now in these refyned layes
  Delight the daintie eares of higher powers:
And so mought they, in their deepe skanning skill,
Alow and grace our Collyns flowing quyll.

"And faire befall that *Faerie Queene* of thine,
  In whose faire eyes love linckt with vertue sittes;
Enfusing, by those bewties fyers devyne,
  Such high conceites into thy humble wittes,
As raised hath poore pastors oaten reedes
From rustick tunes, to chaunt heroique deedes.

"So mought thy *Redcrosse Knight* with happy hand
  Victorious be in that faire Ilands right,
Which thou dost vayle in Type of Faery land,
  Elizas blessed field, that *Albion* hight:
That shieldes her friendes, and warres her mightie foes,
Yet still with people, peace, and plentie flowes.

"But (jolly shepheard) though with pleasing style
  Thou feast the humour of the Courtly trayne,
Let not conceipt thy setled sence beguile,
  Ne daunted be through envy or disdaine.
Subject thy dome to her Empyring spright,
From whence thy Muse, and all the world, takes light.

"HOBYNOLL."

And to the Queen herself Spenser presented his work, in one of the boldest dedications perhaps ever penned :

"To
The Most High, Mightie, and Magnificent
Empresse,
Renowned for piety, vertve, and all gratiovs government,
ELIZABETH,
By the Grace of God,
Queene of England, Fravnce, and Ireland, and of Virginia,
Defendovr of the Faith, &c.
Her most hvmble Servavnt
EDMVND SPENSER,
Doth, in all hvmilitie,
Dedicate, present, and consecrate
These his labovrs,
To live with the eternitie of her fame."

"To live with the eternity of her fame"—the claim was a proud one, but it has proved a prophecy. The publication of the *Faerie Queene* placed him at once and for his life-time at the head of all living English poets. The world of his day immediately acknowledged the charm and perfection of the new work of art which had taken it by surprise. As far as appears, it was welcomed heartily and generously. Spenser speaks in places of envy and detraction, and he, like others, had no doubt his rivals and enemies. But little trace of censure appears, except in the stories about Burghley's dislike of him, as an idle rhymer, and perhaps as a friend of his opponents. But his brother poets, men like Lodge and Drayton, paid honor, though in quaint phrases, to the learned Colon, the reverend Colon, the excellent and cunning Colon. A greater than they, if we may trust his editors, takes him as the representative of poetry, which is so dear to him.

"If music and sweet poetry agree,
As they must needs, the sister and the brother,
Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me,
Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other.
Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch
Upon the lute doth ravish human sense ;
Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such
As passing all conceit, needs no defence.
Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound
That Phœbus' lute, the queen of music, makes ;
And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd
Whenas himself to singing he betakes.
One god is god of both, as poets feign ;
One knight loves both, and both in thee remain."
(*Shakspeare*, in the "*Passionate Pilgrim*," 1599.)

Even the fierce pamphleteer, Thomas Nash, the scourge and torment of poor Gabriel Harvey, addresses Harvey's friend as heavenly Spenser, and extols "the Faerie Singers' stately tuned verse." Spenser's title to be the "Poet of poets" was at once acknowledged as by acclamation. And he himself has no difficulty in accepting his position. In some lines on the death of a friend's wife, whom he laments and praises, the idea presents itself that the great queen may not approve of her Shepherd wasting his lays on meaner persons, and he puts into his friend's mouth a deprecation of her possible jealousy. The lines are characteristic, both in their beauty and music, and in the strangeness, in our eyes, of the excuse made for the poet.

> "Ne let Eliza, royall Shepheardesse,
> The praises of my parted love envy,
> For she hath praises in all plenteousnesse
> Powr'd upon her, like showers of Castaly,
> By her own Shepheard, Colon, her owne Shepheard,
> That her with heavenly hymnes doth deifie,
> Of rustick muse full hardly to be betterd.
>
> "She is the Rose, the glorie of the day,
> And mine the Primrose in the lowly shade:
> Mine, ah! not mine; amisse I mine did say:
> Not mine, but His, which mine awhile her made;
> Mine to be His, with him to live for ay.
> O that so faire a flower so soone should fade,
> And through untimely tempest fall away!
>
> "She fell away in her first ages spring,
> Whil'st yet her leafe was greene, and fresh her rinde,
> And whilst her braunch faire blossomes foorth did bring,
> She fel away against all course of kinde.
> For age to dye is right, but youth is wrong;
> She fel away like fruit blowne downe with winde.
> Weepe, Shepheard! weepe, to make my undersong."

Thus in both his literary enterprises Spenser had been signally successful. The *Shepherd's Calendar*, in 1580, had immediately raised high hopes of his powers. The *Faerie Queene*, in 1590, had more than fulfilled them. In the interval a considerable change had happened in English cultivation. Shakspeare had come to London, though the world did not yet know all that he was. Sidney had published his *Defense of Poesie*, and had written the *Arcadia*, though it was not yet published. Mariowe had begun to write, and others beside him were preparing the change which was to come on the English Drama. Two scholars who had shared with Spenser in the bounty of Robert Nowell were beginning, in different lines, to raise the level of thought and style. Hooker was beginning to give dignity to controversy, and to show what English prose might rise to. Lancelot Andrewes, Spenser's junior at school and college, was training himself at St. Paul's to lead the way to a larger and higher kind of preaching than the English clergy had yet reached. The change of scene from Ireland to the centre of English interests must have been, as Spenser describes it, very impressive. England was alive with aspiration and effort: imaginations were inflamed and hearts stirred by the deeds of men who described with the same energy with which they acted. Amid such influences and with such a friend as Ralegh, Spenser may naturally have been tempted by some of the dreams of advancement of which Ralegh's soul was full. There is strong probability, from the language of his later poems, that he indulged such hopes, and that they were disappointed. A year after the entry in the Stationers' Register of the *Faerie Queene* (29 Dec., 1590), Ponsonby, his publisher, entered a volume of *Complaints, containing sundry small poems of the World's Vanity*," to which he prefixed the following notice :

" THE PRINTER TO THE GENTLE READER.

"SINCE my late setting foorth of the *Faerie Queene*, finding that it nath found a favourable passage amongst you, I have sithence endevoured by all good meanes (for the better encrease and accomplishment of your delights), to get into my handes such smale Poemes of the same Authors, as I heard were disperst abroad in sundrie hands, and not easie to bee come by, by himselfe ; some of them having bene diverslie imbeziled and purloyned from him since his departure over Sea. Of the which I have, by good meanes, gathered togeather these fewe parcels present, which I have caused to bee imprinted altogeather, for that they al seeme to containe like matter of argument in them ; being all complaints and meditations of the worlds vanitie, verie grave and profitable. To which effect I understand that he besides wrote sundrie others, namelie *Ecclesiastes* and *Canticum canticorum*, translated *A senights slumber*, *The hell of lovers*, *his Purgatorie*, being all dedicated to Ladies ; so as it may seeme he ment them all to one volume. Besides some other Pamphlets loosel e scattered abroad : as *The dying Pellican*, *The howers of the Lord*, *The sacrifice of a sinner*, *The seven Psalmes*, &c., which, when I can, either by himselfe or otherwise, attaine too, I meane likewise for your favour sake to set foorth. In the meane time, praying you gentlie to accept of these, and graciouslie to entertaine the new Poet, *I take leave*."

The collection is a miscellaneous one, both as to subjects and date: it contains, among other things, the translations from Petrarch and Du Bellay, which had appeared in Vander Noodt's *Theatre of Worldlings*, in 1569. But there are also some pieces of later date ; and they disclose not only personal sorrows and griefs, but also an experience which had ended in disgust and disappointment. In spite of Ralegh's friendship, he had found that in the Court he was not likely to thrive. The two powerful men who had been his earliest friends had disappeared. Philip Sidney had died in 1586 ; Leicester, soon after the destruction of the Armada, in 1588. And they had been followed (April, 1590) by Sidney's powerful father-in-law, Francis Walsingham. The death of Leicester, untended, unlamented, powerfully impressed Spenser, always keenly alive to the pathetic vicissitudes of human greatness. In one of these pieces, *The Ruins of Time*, addressed to Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke, Spenser thus imagines the death of Leicester—

"It is not long, since these two eyes beheld
A mightie Prence, of most renowmed race,
Whom England high in count of honour held,
And greatest ones did sue to gaine his grace ;
Of greatest ones he, greatest in his place,
Sate in the bosome of his Soveraine,
And *Right and loyall* did his word maintaine.

"I saw him die, I saw him die, as one
Of the meane people, and brought foorth on beare;
I saw him die, and no man left to mone
His dolefull fate, that late him loved deare:
Scarse anie left to close his eyelids neare;
Scarse anie left upon his lips to laie
The sacred sod, or Requiem to saie.

"O! trustless state of miserable men,
That builde your blis on hope of earthly thing,
And vainlie thinke your selves halfe happie then,
When painted faces with smooth flattering
Doo fawne on you, and your wide praises sing;
And, when the courting masker louteth lowe,
Him true in heart and trustie to you trow."

For Sidney, the darling of the time, who had been to him not merely a cordial friend, but the realized type of all that was glorious in manhood, and beautiful in character and gifts, his mourning was more than that of a looker-on at a moving instance of the frailty of greatness. It was the poet's sorrow for the poet, who had almost been to him what the elder brother is to the younger. Both now, and in later years, his affection for one who was become to him a glorified saint, showed itself in deep and genuine expression, through the affectations which crowned the "herse" of Astrophel and Philisides. He was persuaded that Sidney's death had been a grave blow to literature and learning. *The Ruins of Time*, and still more the *Tears of the Muses*, are full of lamentations over returning barbarism and ignorance, and the slight account made by those in power of the gifts and the arts of the writer, the poet, and the dramatist. Under what was popularly thought the crabbed and parsimonious administration of Burghley, and with the churlishness of the Puritans, whom he was supposed to foster, it seemed as if the poetry of the time was passing away in chill discouragement. The effect is described in lines which, as we now naturally suppose, and Dryden also thought, can refer to no one but Shakspeare. But it seems doubtful whether all this could have been said of Shakspeare in 1590. It seems more likely that this also is an extravagant compliment to Philip Sidney, and his masking performances. He was lamented elsewhere under the poetical name of *Willy*. If it refers to him, it was probably written before his death, though not published till after it; for the lines imply, not that he is literally dead, but that he is in retirement. The expression that he is "dead of late" is explained in four lines below, as "choosing to sit in idle cell," and is one of Spenser's common figures for inactivity or sorrow.*

The verses are the lamentations of the Muse of Comedy.

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* *v. Colin Clout*, l. 31. *Astrophel*, l. 175.

"THALIA.

"Where be the sweete delights of learning's treasure
That wont with Comick sock to beautefie
The painted Theaters, and fill with pleasure
The listners eyes and ears with melodie;
In which I late was wont to raine as Queene,
And maske in mirth with Graces well beseene?

"O! all is gone; and all that goodly glee,
Which wont to be the glorie of gay wits,
Is layed abed, and no where now to see;
And in her roome unseemly Sorrow sits,
With hollow browes and greisly countenance,
Marring my joyous gentle dalliaunce.

"And him beside sits ugly Barbarisme,
And brutish Ignorance, ycrept of late
Out of dredd darknes of the deepe Abysme,
Where being bredd, he light and heaven does hate:
They in the mindes of men now tyrannize,
And the faire Scene with rudenes foule disguize.

"All places they with follie have possest,
And with vaine toyes the vulgare entertaine;
But me have banished, with all the rest
That whilome wont to wait upon my traine,
Fine Counterfesaunce, and unhurtfull Sport,
Delight, and Laughter, deckt in seemly sort.

"All these, and all that els the Comick Stage
With seasoned wit and goodly pleasance graced,
By which mans life in his likest image
Was limned forth, are wholly now defaced;
And those sweete wits, which wont the like to frame,
Are now despizd, and made a laughing game.

"And he, the man whom Nature selfe had made
To mock her self, and truth to imitate,
With kindly counter under Mimick shade,
Our pleasant Willy, ah! *is dead of late*;
With whom all joy and jolly merriment
Is also dreaded, and in dolour drent.

* * * * * *

"But that same gentle Spirit, from whose pen
Large streames of honnie and sweete Nectar flowe,
Scorning the boldnes of such base-born men,
Which dare their follies forth so rashlie throwe,
Doth rather choose to sit in idle Cell,
Than so himselfe to mockerie to sell."

But the most remarkable of these pieces is a satirical fable, *Mother Hubberd's Tale of the Ape and Fox*, which may take rank with the satirical writings of Chaucer and Dryden for keenness of touch, for breadth of treatment, for swing and fiery scorn, and sustained strength of sarcasm. By his visit to the Court, Spenser had increased his knowledge of the realities of life. That brilliant Court, with a goddess at its head, and full of charming swains and divine nymphs, had also another side. It was still his poetical heaven. But with that odd insensibility to anomaly and glaring contrasts, which is seen in his time, and perhaps exists at all times, he passed from the celebration of the dazzling glories of Cynthia's Court into a fierce vein of invective against its treacheries, its vain shows, its unceasing and mean intrigues, its savage jealousies, its fatal rivalries, the scramble there for preferment in Church and State. When it is considered what great persons might easily and naturally have been identified at the time with the *Ape and the Fox*, the confederate impostors, charlatans, and bullying swindlers, who had stolen the lion's skin, and by it mounted to the high places of the State, it seems to be a proof of the indifference of the Court to the power of mere literature, that it should have been safe to write and publish so freely and so cleverly. Dull Catholic lampoons and Puritan scurrilities did not pass thus unnoticed. They were viewed as dangerous to the State, and dealt with accordingly. The fable contains what we can scarcely doubt to be some of that wisdom which Spenser learnt by his experience of the Court.

"So pitifull a thing is Suters state!
Most miserable man, whom wicked fate
Hath brought to Court, to sue for *had-ywist*,
That few have found, and manie one hath mist!
Full little knowest thou, that hast not tride,
What hell it is in suing long to bide:
To loose good dayes, that might be better spent;
To wast long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow;
To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres;
To have thy asking, yet waite manie yeeres;
To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;
To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaires;
To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undonne.
Unhappie wight, borne to disastrous end,
That doth his life in so long tendance spend!
  "Who ever leaves sweete home, where meane estate
In safe assurance, without strife or hate,
Findes all things needfull for contentment meeke,
And will to Court for shadowes vaine to seeke,
Or hope to gaine, himself will a daw trie:
That curse God send unto mine enemie!"

Spenser probably did not mean his characters to fit too closely to living persons. That might have been dangerous. But it is difficult to believe that he had not distinctly in his eye a very great personage, the greatest in England next to the Queen, in the following picture of the doings of the Fox installed at Court.

"But the false Foxe most kindly plaid his part;
For whatsoever mother-wit or arte
Could worke, he put in proofe: no practise slie,
No counterpoint of cunning policie,
No reach, no breach, that might him profit bring,
But he the same did to his purpose wring.

Nought suffered he the Ape to give or graunt,
But through his hand must passe the Fiaunt.

* * * * * *

He chaffred Chayres in which Churchmen were set,
And breach of lawes to privie ferme did let:
No statute so established might bee,
Nor ordinaunce so needfull, but that hee
Would violate, though not with violence,
Yet under colour of the confidence
The which the Ape repos'd in him alone,
And reckned him the kingdomes corner-stone.
And ever, when he ought would bring to pas,
His long experience the platform was:
And, when he ought not pleasing would put by
The cloke was care of thrift, and husbandry,
For to encrease the common treasures store;
But his owne treasure he encreased more,
And lifted up his loftie toweres thereby,
That they began to threat the neighbour sky;
The whiles the Princes pallaces fell fast
To ruine (for what thing can ever last?)
And whilest the other Peeres, for povertie,
Were forst their ancient houses to let lie,
And their olde Castles to the ground to fall,
Which their forefathers, famous over-all,
Had founded for the Kingdome's ornament,
And for their memories long moniment.
But he no count made of Nobilitie,
Nor the wilde beasts whom armes did glorifie,
The Realmes chiefe strength and girlond of the crowne.
All these through fained crimes he thrust adowne,
Or made them dwell in darknes of disgrace:
For none, but whom he list, might come in place.
  "Of men of arms he had but small regard,
But kept them lowe, and streigned verie hard.
For men of learning little he esteemed;
His wisdome he above their learning deemed.
As for the rascall Commons, least he cared,
For not so common was his bountie shared.
Let God, (said he) if please, care for the manie,
I for my selfe must care before els anie.
So did he good to none, to manie ill,
So did he all the kingdome rob and pill;
Yet none durst speake, ne none durst of him plane,
So great he was in grace, and rich through gaine.
Ne would he anie let to have accesse
Unto the Prince, but by his owne addresse,
For all that els did come were sure to faile."

Even at Court, however, the poet finds a contrast to all this: he had known Philip Sidney, and Ralegh was his friend.

"Yet the brave Courtier, in whose beauteous thought
Regard of honour harbours more than ought,
Doth loath such base condition, to backbite
Anies good name for envie or despite:
He stands on tearmes of honourable minde,
Ne will be carried with the common winde
Of Courts inconstant mutabilitie,
Ne after everie tattling fable flie;

But heares and sees the follies of the rest,
And therefore gathers for himselfe the best.
He will not creepe, nor crouche with faned face,
But walkes upright with comely stedfast pace,
And unto all doth yeeld due courtesie ;
But not with kissed hand belowe the knee,
As that same Apish crue is wont to doo :
For he disdaines himselfe t' embase theretoo.
He hates fowle leasings, and vile flatterie,
Two filthie blots in noble gentrie ;
And lothefull idlenes he doth detest,
The canker worme of everie gentle brest.

"Or lastly, when the bodie list to pause,
His minde unto the Muses he withdrawes :
Sweete Ladie Muses, Ladies of delight !
Delights of life, and ornaments of light !
With whom he close confers with wise discourse,
Of Natures workes, of heavens continuall course,
Of forreine lands, of people different,
Of kingdomes change, of divers gouvernment,
Of dreadfull battailes of renowned Knights ;
With which he kindleth his ambitious sprights
To like desire and praise of noble fame,
The onely upshot whereto he doth ayme :
For all his minde on honour fixed is,
To which he levels all his purposis,
And in his Princes service spends his dayes,
Not so much for to gaine, or for to raise
Himselfe to high degree, as for his grace,
And in his liking to winne worthie place,
Through due deserts and comely carriage."

The fable also throws light on the way in which Spenser regarded the religious parties, whose strife was becoming loud and threatening. Spenser is often spoken of as a Puritan. He certainly had the Puritan hatred of Rome; and in the Church system as it existed in England he saw many instances of ignorance, laziness, and corruption ; and he agreed with the Puritans in denouncing them. His pictures of the "formal priest," with his excuses for doing nothing, his new-fashioned and improved substitutes for the ornate and also too lengthy ancient service, and his general ideas of self-complacent comfort, has in it an odd mixture of Roman Catholic irony with Puritan censure. Indeed, though Spenser hated with an Englishman's hatred all that he considered Roman superstition and tyranny, he had a sense of the poetical impressiveness of the old ceremonial, and the ideas which clung to it—its pomp, its beauty, its suggestiveness—very far removed from the iconoclastic temper of the Puritans. In his *View of the State of Ireland*, he notes as a sign of its evil condition the state of the churches, "most of them ruined and even with the ground," and the rest "so unhandsomely patched and thatched, that men do even shun the places, for the uncomeliness thereof." "The outward form (assure yourself)," he adds, "doth greatly draw the rude people to the reverencing and frequenting thereof, *whatever some of our late too* *nice fools may say*, that there is nothing in the seemly form and comely order of the church."

"'Ah! but (said th' Ape) the charge is wondrous great,
To feede mens soules, and hath an heavie threat.'
'To feed mens soules (quoth he) is not in man;
For they must feed themselves, doo what we can.
We are but charged to lay the meate before:
Eat they that list, we need to doo no more.
But God it is that feeds them with his grace,
The bread of life powr'd downe from heavenly place.
Therefore said he, that with the budding rod
Did rule the Jewes, *All shalbe taught of God.*
That same hath Jesus Christ now to him raught,
By whom the flock is rightly fed, and taught:
He is the Shepheard, and the Priest is hee;
We but his shepheard swaines ordain'd to bee.
Therefore herewith doo not your selfe dismay;
Ne is the paines so great, but beare ye may,
For not so great, as it was want of yore,
It's now a dayes, ne halfe so streight and sore.
They whilome used duly everie day
Their service and their holie things to say,
At morne and even, besides their Anthemes sweete,
Their penie Masses, and their Complynes meete,
Their Diriges, their Trentals, and their shrifts.
Their memories, their singings, and their gifts.
Now all those needlesse works are laid away;
Now once a weeke, upon the Sabbath day,
It is enough to doo our small devotion,
And then to follow any merrie motion.
Ne are we tyde to fast, but when we list;
Ne to weare garments base of wollen twist,
But with the finest silkes us to aray,
That before God we may appeare more gay,
Resembling Aarons glorie in his place:
For farre unfit it is, that person bace
Should with vile cloaths approach Gods majestie,
Whom no uncleannes may approachen nie;
Or that all men, which anie master serve,
Good garments for their service should deserve;
But he that serves the Lord of hoasts most high,
And that in highest place, t' approach him nigh,
And all the peoples prayers to present
Before his throne, as on ambassage sent
Both too and fro, should not deserve to weare
A garment better than of wooll or heare.
Beside, we may have lying by our sides
Our lovely Lasses, or bright shining Brides:
We be not tyde to wilfull chastitie,
But have the Gospell of free libertie."

But his weapon is double-edged, and he had not much more love for

"That ungracious crew which feigns demurest grace."

The first prescription which the Priest gives to the Fox who desires to rise to preferment in the Church is to win the favor of some great Puritan noble.

> "First, therefore, when ye have in handsome wise
> Your selfe attyred, as you can devise,
> Then to some Noble-man your selfe applye,
> Or other great one in the worldës eye,
> That hath a zealous disposition.
> To God, and so to his religion.
> There must thou fashion eke a godly zeale,
> Such as no carpers may contrayre reveale;
> For each thing fained ought more warie bee.
> There thou must walke in sober gravitee,
> And seeme as Saintlike as Sainte Radegund:
> Fast much, pray oft, looke lowly on the ground,
> And unto everie one doo curtesie meeke:
> These lookes (nought saying) doo a benefice seeke,
> And be thou sure one not to lack or long."

But he is impartial, and points out that there are other ways of rising—by adopting the fashions of the Court, "facing, and forging, and scoffing, and crouching to please," and so to "mock out a benefice;" or else, by compounding with a patron to give him half the profits, and in the case of a bishopric, to submit to the alienation of its manors to some powerful favorite, as the Bishop of Salisbury had to surrender Sherborn to Sir Walter Ralegh. Spenser, in his dedication of *Mother Hubberd's Tale* to one of the daughters of Sir John Spencer, Lady Compton and Monteagle, speaks of it as "long sithence composed in the raw conceit of youth." But, whatever this may mean, and it was his way thus to deprecate severe judgments, his allowing the publication of it at this time shows, if the work itself did not show it, that he was in very serious earnest in his bitter sarcasms on the base and evil arts which brought success at the Court.

He stayed in England about a year and a half [1590–91], long enough, apparently, to make up his mind that he had not much to hope for from his great friends, Ralegh and perhaps Essex, who were busy on their own schemes. Ralegh, from whom Spenser might hope most, was just beginning to plunge into that extraordinary career, in the thread of which glory and disgrace, far-sighted and princely public spirit and insatiate private greed, were to be so strangely intertwined. In 1592 he planned the great adventure which astonished London by the fabulous plunder of the Spanish treasure-ships; in the same year he was in the Tower, under the Queen's displeasure for his secret marriage, affecting the most ridiculous despair at her going away from the neighborhood, and pouring forth his flatteries on this old woman of sixty as if he had no bride of his own to love:—"I that was wont to behold her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus; the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks like a nymph; sometimes, sitting in the shade like a goddess; sometimes, singing like an angel; sometimes, playing like Orpheus—behold the sorrow of this world—once amiss, hath bereaved me of all." Then came the exploration of Guiana, the expedition to Cadiz, the Island voyage [1595–1597]. Ralegh had something else to do than to think of Spenser's fortunes.

Spenser turned back once more to Ireland, to his clerkship of the Council of Munster, which he soon resigned ; to be worried with law-suits about "lands in Shanballymore and Ballingrath," by his time-serving and oppressive Irish neighbor, Maurice Roche, Lord Fermoy ; to brood still over his lost ideal and hero, Sidney ; to write the story of his visit in the pastoral supplement to the *Shepherd's Calendar*, *Colin Clout's come home again* ; to pursue the story of Gloriana's knights ; and to find among the Irish maidens another Elizabeth, a wife instead of a queen, whose wooing and winning were to give new themes to his imagination.

CHAPTER V.

THE FAERIE QUEENE.

" *Uncouth* [=unknown], *unkist*," are the words from Chaucer,* with which the friend who introduced Spenser's earliest poetry to the world bespeaks forbearance, and promises matter for admiration and delight in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. "You have to know my new poet," he says in effect : "and when you have learned his ways, you will find how much you have to honor and love him." "I doubt not," he says, with a boldness of prediction, manifestly sincere, which is remarkable about an unknown man, "that so soon as his name shall come into the knowledge of men, and his worthiness be sounded in the trump of fame, but that he shall be not only kissed, but also beloved of all, embraced of the most, and wondered at of the best." Never was prophecy more rapidly and more signally verified, probably beyond the prophet's largest expectation. But he goes on to explain and indeed apologize for certain features of the new poet's work, which even to readers of that day might seem open to exception. And to readers of to-day, the phrase, *uncouth*, *unkist*, certainly expresses what many have to confess, if they are honest, as to their first acquaintance with the *Faerie Queene*. Its place in literature is established beyond controversy. Yet its first and unfamiliar aspect inspires respect, perhaps interest, rather than attracts and satisfies. It is not the remoteness of the subject alone, nor the distance of three centuries which raises a bar between it and and those to whom it is new. Shakspeare becomes familiar to us from the first moment. The impossible legends of Arthur have been made in the language of to-day once more to touch our sympathies, and have lent themselves to express our thoughts. But at first acquaintance the *Faerie Queene* to many of us has been disappointing. It has seemed not only antique, but artificial. It has seemed fantastic. It has seemed, we cannot help avowing, tiresome. It is not till the early appearances have worn off, and we have learned to make many allowances and to surrender ourselves to the feelings and the standards by which it claims to affect and govern us, that we really find under what noble guidance we are proceeding, and what subtle and varied spells are ever round us.

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* "Unknow, unkyst ; and lost, that is unsought."
Troylus and Cryseide, lib. i.

1. The *Faerie Queene* is the work of an unformed literature, the product of an unperfected art. English poetry, English language, in Spenser's, nay in Shakspeare's day, had much to learn, much to unlearn. They never, perhaps, have been stronger or richer than in that marvellous burst of youth, with all its freedom of invention, of observation, of reflection. But they had not that which only the experience and practice of eventful centuries could give them. Even genius must wait for the gifts of time. It cannot forerun the limitations of its day, nor anticipate the conquests and common possessions of the future. Things are impossible to the first great masters of art which are easy to their second-rate successors. The possibility or the necessity of breaking through some convention, of attempting some unattempted effort, had not, among other great enterprises, occurred to them. They were laying the steps in a magnificent fashion on which those after them were to rise, But we ought not to shut our eyes to mistakes or faults to which attention had not yet been awakened, or for avoiding which no reasonable means had been found. To learn from genius, we must try to recognize both what is still imperfect and what is grandly and unwontedly successful. There is no great work of art, not excepting even the Iliad or the Parthenon, which is not open, especially in point of ornament, to the scoff of the scoffer, or to the injustice of those who do not mind being unjust. But all art belongs to man; and man, even when he is greatest, is always limited and imperfect.

The *Faerie Queene*, as a whole, bears on its face a great fault of construction. It carries with it no adequate account of its own story; it does not explain itself, or contain in its own structure what would enable a reader to understand how it arose. It has to be accounted for by a prose explanation and key outside of itself. The poet intended to reserve the central event, which was the occasion of all the adventures of the poem, till they had all been related, leaving them as it were in the air, till at the end of twelve long books the reader should at last be told how the whole thing had originated, and what it was all about. He made the mistake of confounding the answer to a riddle with the crisis which unties the tangle of a plot and satisfies the suspended interest of a tale. None of the great model poems before him, however full of digression and episode, had failed to arrange their story with clearness. They needed no commentary outside themselves to say why they began as they did, and out of what antecedents they arose. If they started at once from the middle of things, they made their story, as it unfolded itself, explain, by more or less skilful devices, all that needed to be known about their beginnings. They did not think of rules of art. They did of themselves naturally what a good story-teller does, to make himself intelligible and interesting; and it is not easy to be interesting, unless the parts of the story are in their place.

The defect seems to have come upon Spenser when it was too late to remedy it in the construction of his poem; and he adopted the somewhat clumsy expedient of telling us what the poem itself ought to have told us of its general story, in a letter to Sir Walter Ralegh. Ralegh himself, indeed, suggested the letter: apparently (from the date, Jan. 23, 1590), after the first part had gone through the press. And without this after-thought, as the twelfth book was never reached, we should have been left to gather the outline and plan of the story from imperfect glimpses and allusions, as we have to fill up from hints and assumptions the gaps of an unskilful narrator, who leaves out what is essential to the understanding of his tale.

Incidentally, however, this letter is an advantage: for we have in it the poet's own statement of his purpose in writing, as well as a necessary sketch of his story. His allegory, as he had explained to Bryskett and his friends, had a moral purpose. He meant to shadow forth, under the figures of twelve knights, and in their various exploits, the characteristics of "a gentleman or noble person," "fashioned in virtuous and gentle discipline." He took his machinery from the popular legends about King Arthur, and his heads of moral philosophy from the current Aristotelian catalogue of the Schools.

"Sir, knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and this booke of mine, which I have entituled the Faerie Queene, being a continued Allegory, or darke conceit, I haue thought good, as well for avoyding of gealous and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof (being so by you commanded), to discover unto you the general intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any particular purposes, or by accidents, therein occasioned. The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline: Which for that I conceived shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter than for profite of the ensample, I chose the historye of King Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many mens former workes, and also furthest from the daunger of envy, and suspition of present time. In which I have followed all the antique Poets historicall; first Homere, who in the Persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governour and a vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Aeneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando: and lately Tasso dissevered them againe, and formed both parts in two persons, namely that part which they in Philosophy call Ethics, or vertues of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo; the other named Politice in his Godfredo. By ensample of which excellente Poets, I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised; the which is the purpose of these first twelve bookes: which if I finde to be well accepted, I may be

> perhaps encouraged to frame the other part of polliticke vertues in his person, after that hee came to be king."

Then, after explaining that he meant the *Faerie Queene* "for glory in general intention, but in particular" for Elizabeth, and his Faerie Land for her kingdom, he proceeds to explain, what the first three books hardly explain, what the Faerie Queene had to do with the structure of the poem.

> "But, because the beginning of the whole worke seemed abrupte, and as depending upon other antecedents, it needs that ye know the occasion of these three knights seuerall adventures. For the Methode of a Poet historical is not such, as of an Historiographer. For an Historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions; but a Poet thrusteth into the middest, even where it most concerneth him, and their recoursing to the thinges forepaste, and divining of thinges to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all.
>
> "The beginning therefore of my history, if it were to be told by an Historiographer should be the twelfth booke, which is the last; where I devise that the Faerie Queene kept her Annuall feaste xii. dayes; uppon which xii. severall dayes, the occasions of the xii. severall adventures hapned, which, being undertaken by xii. severall knights, are in these xii. books severally handled and discoursed. The first was this. In the beginning of the feast, there presented him selfe a tall clownishe younge man, who falling before the Queene of Faries desired a boone (as the manner then was) which during that feast she might not refuse; which was that hee might have the atchievement of any adventure, which during that feaste should happen: that being graunted, he rested him on the floore, unfitte through his rusticity for a better place. Soone after entred a faire Ladye in mourning weedes, riding on a white Asse, with a dwarfe behinde her leading a warlike steed, that bore the Armes of a knight, and his speare in the dwarfes hand. Shee, falling before the Queene of Faeries, complayned that her father and mother, an ancient King and Queene, had beene by an huge dragon many years shut up in a brasen Castle, who thence suffered them not to yssew; and therefore besought the Faerie Queene to assygne her some one of her knights to take on him that exployt. Presently that clownish person, upstarting, desired that adventure: whereat the Queene much wondering, and the Lady much gainesaying, yet he earnestly importuned his desire. In the end the Lady told him, that unlesse that armour which she brought would serve him (that is, the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul, vi. Ephes.) that he could not succeed in that enterprise; which being forthwith put upon him, with dewe furnitures thereunto, he seemed the goodliest man in al that company, and was well liked of the Lady. And eftesoones taking on him knighthood, and mounting on that straunge courser, he went forth with her on that adventure: where beginneth the first booke, viz.
>
> "A gentle knight was pricking on the playne, &c."

That it was not without reason that this explanatory key was prefixed to the work, and that either Spenser or Ralegh felt it to be almost indispensable, appears from the concluding paragraph.

> "Thus much, Sir, I have briefly overronne to direct your understanding to the wel-head of the History; that from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit, ye may as in a handfull gripe al the discourse, which otherwise may happily seeme tedious and confused."

According to the plan thus sketched out, we have but a fragment of the work. It was published in two parcels, each of three books, in 1590 and 1596; and after his death two cantos, with two stray stanzas, of a seventh book were found and printed. Each perfect book consists of twelve cantos of from thirty-five to sixty of his nine-line stanzas. The books published in 1590 contain, as he states in his prefatory letter, the legends of *Holiness*, of *Temperance*, and of *Chastity*. Those published in 1596 contain the legends of *Friendship*, of *Justice*, and of *Courtesy*. The posthumous cantos are entitled, *Of Mutability*, and are said to be apparently parcel of a legend of *Constancy*. The poem which was to treat of the "politic" virtues was never approached. Thus we have but a fourth part of the whole of the projected work. It is very doubtful whether the remaining six books were completed. But it is probable that a portion of them was written, which, except the cantos *On Mutability*, has perished. And the intended titles or legends of the later books have not been preserved.

Thus the poem was to be an allegorical story; a story branching out into twelve separate stories, which themselves would branch out again and involve endless other stories. It is a complex scheme to keep well in hand, and Spenser's art in doing so has been praised by some of his critics. But the art, if there is any, is so subtle that it fails to save the reader from perplexity. The truth is that the power of ordering and connecting a long and complicated plan was not one of Spenser's gifts. In the first two books, the allegorical story proceeds from point to point with fair coherence and consecutiveness. After them the attempt to hold the scheme together, except in the loosest and most general way, is given up as too troublesome or too confined. The poet prefixes, indeed, the name of a particular virtue to each book, but with slender reference to it he surrenders himself freely to his abundant flow of ideas, and to whatever fancy or invention tempts him, and ranges unrestrained over the whole field of knowledge and imagination. In the first two books, the allegory is transparent, and the story connected. The allegory is of the nature of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It starts from the belief that religion, purified from falsehood, superstition, and sin, is the foundation of all nobleness in man; and it portrays, under images and with names, for the most part easily understood, and easily applied to real counterparts, the struggle which every one at that time supposed to be going on, between absolute truth and righteousness on one side, and fatal error and bottomless wickedness on the other. Una, the Truth, the one and only Bride of man's spirit, marked out by the tokens of humility and innocence, and by her power over wild and untamed natures—the single Truth, in contrast to the counterfeit Duessa false religion, and its actual embodiment in the false rival Queen of Scots—Truth, the object of passionate homage, real with many, professed with all, which after the impostures and scandals of the preceding age had now become characteristic of that of Elizabeth—Truth, its claims, its dangers, and its champions, are the subject of the first book: and it is represented as leading the manhood of England, in spite not only of terrible conflict, but of defeat and falls, through the discipline of repentance, to holiness and the blessedness which comes with it. The Red Cross Knight, St. George of England, whose name Georgos, the Ploughman, is dwelt upon, apparently to suggest that from the commonalty, the "tall clownish young men," were raised up the great champions of the Truth—though sorely troubled by the wiles of Duessa, by the craft of the arch-sorcerer, by the force and pride of the great powers of the Apocalyptic Beast and Dragon, finally overcomes them, and wins the deliverance of Una and her love.

The second book, *Of Temperance*, pursues the subject, and represents the internal conquests of self-mastery, the conquests of a man over his passions, his violence, his covetousness, his ambition, his despair, his sensuality. Sir Guyon, after conquering many foes of goodness, is the destroyer of the most perilous of them all, Acrasia, licentiousness, and her ensnaring Bower of Bliss. But after this, the thread at once of story and allegory, slender henceforth at the best, is neglected and often entirely lost. The third book, the *Legend of Chastity*, is a repetition of the ideas of the latter part of the second, with a heroine, Britomart, in place of the Knight of the previous book, Sir Guyon, and with a special glorification of the high-flown and romantic sentiments about purity which were the poetic creed of the courtiers of Elizabeth, in flagrant and sometimes in tragic contrast to their practical conduct of life. The loose and ill-compacted nature of the plan becomes still more evident in the second instalment of the work. Even the special note of each particular virtue becomes more faint and indistinct. The one law to which the poet feels bound is to have twelve cantos in each book; and to do this he is sometimes driven to what in later times has been called padding. One of the cantos of the third book is a genealogy of British kings from Geoffrey of Monmouth; one of the cantos of the *Legend of Friendship* is made up of an episode describing the marriage of the Thames and the Medway, with an elaborate catalogue of the English and Irish rivers, and the names of the sea-nymphs. In truth, he had exhausted his proper allegory, or he got tired of it. His poem became an elastic framework, into which he could fit whatever interested him and tempted him to composition. The gravity of the first books disappears. He passes into satire and caricature. We meet with Braggadochio and Trompart, with the discomfiture of Malecasta, with the conjugal troubles of Malbecco and Helenore, with the imitation from Ariosto of the Squire of Dames. He puts into verse a poetical physiology of the human body; he translates Lucretius, and speculates on the origin of human souls; he speculates, too, on social justice, and composes an argumentative refutation of the Anabaptist theories of right and equality among men. As the poem proceeds, he seems to feel himself more free to introduce what he pleases. Allusions to real men and events are sometimes clear, at other times evident, though they have now ceased to be intelligible to us. His disgust and resentment breaks out at the ways of the Court in sarcastic moralizing, or in pictures of dark and repulsive imagery. The characters and pictures of his friends furnish material for his poem; he does not mind touching on the misadventures of Ralegh, and even of Lord Grey, with sly humor or a word of candid advice. He becomes bolder in the distinct introduction of contemporary history. The defeat of Duessa was only figuratively shown in the first portion, in the second the subject is resumed. As Elizabeth is the "one form of many names," Gloriana, Belphœbe, Britomart, Mercilla, so, "under feigned colors shading a true case," he deals with her rival. Mary seems at one time the false Florimel, the creature of enchantment, stirring up strife, and fought for by the foolish knights whom she deceives, Blandamour and Paridell, the counterparts of Norfolk and the intriguers of 1571. At another, she is the fierce Amazonian queen. Radegund, by whom, for a moment, even Arthegal is brought into disgraceful thraldom, till Britomart, whom he has once fought against, delivers him. And, finally, the fate of the typical Duessa is that of the real Mary Queen of Scots described in great detail—a liberty in dealing with great affairs of State for which James of Scotland actually desired that he should be tried and punished.* So Philip II. is at one time the Soldan, at another the Spanish monster Geryoneo, at another the fosterer of Catholic intrigues in France and Ireland, Grantorto. But real names are also introduced with scarcely any disguise: Guizor, and Burbon, the Knight who throws away his shield, Henry IV., and his Lady Flourdelis, the Lady Belge, and her seventeen sons: the Lady Irena, whom Arthegal delivers. The overthrow of the Armada, the English war in the Low Countries, the apostasy of Henry IV., the deliverance of Ireland from the "great wrong" of Desmond's rebellion, the giant Grantorto, form, under more or less transparent allegory, great part of the *Legend of Justice*. Nay, Spenser's long-fostered revenge on the lady who had once scorned him, the *Rosalind* of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, the *Mirabella* of the *Faerie Queene*, and his own late and happy marriage in Ireland, are also brought in to supply materials for the *Legend of Courtesy*. So multifarious is the poem, full of all that he thought, or observed, or felt; a receptacle, without much care to avoid repetition, or to prune, correct, and condense, for all the abundance of his ideas, as they welled forth in his mind day by day. It is really a collection of separate tales and allegories, as much as the *Arabian Nights*, or as its counterpart and rival of our own century, the *Idylls of the King*. As a whole, it is confusing: but we need not treat it as a whole. Its continued interest soon breaks down. But it is probably best that Spenser gave his mind the vague freedom which suited it, and that he did not make efforts to tie himself down to his prearranged but too ambitious plan. We can hardly lose our way in it, for there is no way to lose. It is a wilderness in which we are left to wander. But there may be interest and pleasure in a wilderness, if we are prepared for the wandering.

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* Hales' *Life*, Globe Edition.

Still, the complexity, or rather the uncared-for and clumsy arrangement of the poem is matter which disturbs a reader's satisfaction, till he gets accustomed to the poet's way, and resigns himself to it. It is a heroic poem, in which the heroine, who gives her name to it, never appears: a story, of which the basis and starting-point is whimsically withheld for disclosure in the last book, which was never written. If Ariosto's jumps and transitions are more audacious, Spenser's intricacy is more puzzling. Adventures begin which have no finish. Actors in them drop from the clouds, claim an interest, and we ask in vain what has become of them. A vein of what are manifestly contemporary allusions breaks across the moral drift of the allegory, with an apparently distinct yet obscured meaning, and one of which it is the work of dissertations to find the key. The passion of the age was for ingenious riddling in morality as in love. And in Spenser's allegories we are not seldom at a loss to make out what and how much was really intended, amid a maze of overstrained analogies and oversubtle conceits, and attempts to hinder a too close and dangerous identification.

Indeed, Spenser's mode of allegory, which was historical as well as moral, and contains a good deal of history, if we knew it, often seems devised to throw curious readers off the scent. It was purposely baffling and hazy. A characteristic trait was singled out. A name was transposed in anagram, like Irena, or distorted, as if by imperfect pronunciation, like Burbon and Arthegal, or invented to express a quality, like Una, or Gloriana, or Corceca, or Fradubio, or adopted with no particular reason from the *Morte d'Arthur*, or any other old literature. The personage is introduced with some feature or amid circumstances which seem for a moment to fix the meaning. But when we look to the sequence of history being kept up in the sequence of the story, we find ourselves thrown out. A character which fits one person puts on the marks of another: a likeness which we identify with one real person passes into the likeness of some one else. The real, in person, incident, institution, shades off in the ideal; after showing itself by plain tokens, it turns aside out of its actual path of fact, and ends, as the poet thinks it ought to end, in victory or defeat, glory or failure. Prince Arthur passes from Leicester to Sidney, and then back again to Leicester. There are double or treble allegories; Elizabeth is Gloriana, Belphœbe, Britomart, Mercilla, perhaps Amoret; her rival is Duessa, the false Florimel, probably the fierce temptress, the Amazon Radegund. Thus, what for a moment was clear and definite, fades like the changing fringe of a dispersing cloud. The character which we identified disappears in other scenes and adventures, where we lose sight of all that identified it. A complete transformation destroys the likeness which was begun. There is an intentional dislocation of the parts of the story, when they might make it imprudently close in its reflection of facts or resemblance in portraiture. A feature is shown, a manifest allusion made, and then the poet starts off in other directions, to confuse and perplex all attempts at interpretation, which might be too particular and too certain. This was, no doubt, merely according to the fashion of the times, and the habits of mind into which the poet had grown. But there were often reasons for it, in an age so suspicious, and so dangerous to those who meddled with high matters of state.

2. Another feature which is on the surface of the *Faerie Queene*, and which will displease a reader who has been trained to value what is natural and genuine, is its affectation of the language and the customs of life belonging to an age which is not its own. It is, indeed, redolent of the present: but it is almost avowedly an imitation of what was current in the days of Chaucer: of what were supposed to be the words, and the social ideas and conditions, of the age of chivalry. He looked back to the fashions and ideas of the Middle Ages, as Pindar sought his materials in the legends and customs of the Homeric times, and created a revival of the spirit of the age of the Heroes in an age of tyrants and incipient democracies.* The age of chivalry, in Spenser's day far distant, had yet left two survivals, one real, the other formal. The real survival was the spirit of armed adventure, which was never stronger or more stirring than in the gallants and discoverers of Elizabeth's reign, the captains of the English companies in the Low Countries, the audacious sailors who explored unknown oceans and plundered the Spaniards, the scholars and gentlemen equally ready for work on sea and land, like Ralegh and Sir Richard Grenville, of the "Revenge." The formal survival was the fashion of keeping up the trappings of knightly times, as we keep up Judges' wigs, court dresses, and Lord Mayors' shows. In actual life it was seen in pageants and ceremonies, in the yet lingering parade of jousts and tournaments, in the knightly accoutrements still worn in the days of the bullet and the cannon-ball. In the apparatus of the poet, as all were shepherds when he wanted to represent the life of peace and letters, so all were knights, or the foes and victims of knights, when his theme was action and enterprise. It was the custom that the Muse masked, to use Spenser's word, under these disguises; and this conventional masquerade of pastoral poetry or knight-errantry was the form under which the poetical school that preceded the dramatists naturally expressed their ideas. It seems to us odd that peaceful sheepcots and love-sick swains should stand for the world of the Tudors and Guises, or that its cunning state-craft and relentless cruelty should be represented by the generous follies of an imaginary chivalry. But it was the fashion which Spenser found, and he accepted it. His genius was not of that sort which breaks out from trammels, but of that which makes the best of what it finds. And whatever we may think of the fashion, at least he gave it new interest and splendor by the spirit with which he threw himself into it.

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* *Vid.* Keble, *Prælect. Acad.*, xxiv. p. 479, 480.

The condition which he took as the groundwork of his poetical fabric suggested the character of his language. Chaucer was then the "God of English poetry;" his was the one name which filled a place apart in the history of English verse. Spenser was a student of Chaucer, and borrowed as he judged fit, not only from his vocabulary, but from his grammatical precedents and analogies, with the object of giving an appropriate coloring to what was to be raised as far as possible above familiar life. Besides this, the language was still in such an unsettled state that, from a man with resources like Spenser's, it naturally invited attempts to enrich and color it, to increase its flexibility and power. The liberty of reviving old forms, of adopting from the language of the street and market homely but expressive words or combinations, of following in the track of convenient constructions, of venturing on new and bold phrases, was rightly greater in his time than at a later stage of the language. Many of his words, either invented or preserved, are happy additions; some which have not taken root in the language, we may regret. But it was a liberty which he abused. He was extravagant and unrestrained in his experiments on language. And they were made not merely to preserve or to invent a good expression. On his own authority he cuts down or he alters a word, or he adopts a mere corrupt pronunciation, to suit a place in his metre, or because he wants a rhyme. Precedents, as Mr. Guest has said, may no doubt be found for each one of these sacrifices to the necessities of metre or rhyme, in some one or other living dialectic usage, or even in printed books—"*blend*" for "*blind*," "*misleeke*" for "*mislike*," "*kest*" for "*cast*," "*cherry*" for "*cherish*," "*vilde*" for "*vile*," or even "*wawes*" for "*waves*," because it has to rhyme to "*jaws*." But when they are profusely used as they are in Spenser, they argue, as critics of his own age, such as Puttenham, remarked, either want of trouble or want of resource. In his impatience he is reckless in making a word which he wants—"fortunize," "mercified," "unblindfold," "relive"—he is reckless in making one word do the duty of another, interchanging actives and passives, transferring epithets from their proper subjects. The "humbled grass" is the grass on which a man lies humbled: the "lamentable eye" is the eye which laments. "His treatment of words," says Mr. Craik, "on such occasions"—occasions of difficulty to his verse—"is like nothing that ever was seen, unless it might be Hercules breaking the back of the Nemean lion. He gives them any sense and any shape that the case may demand. Sometimes he merely alters a letter or two; sometimes he twists off the head or the tail of the unfortunate vocable altogether. But this fearless, lordly, truly royal style makes one only feel the more how easily, if he chose, he could avoid the necessity of having recourse to such outrages."

His own generation felt his license to be extreme. "In affecting the ancients," said Ben Jonson, "he writ no language." Daniel writes sarcastically, soon after the *Faerie Queene* appeared, of those who

> "Sing of knights and Palladines,
> In aged accents and untimely words."

And to us, though students of the language must always find interest in the storehouse of ancient or invented language to be found in Spenser, this mixture of what is obsolete or capriciously new is a bar, and not an unreasonable one, to a frank welcome at first acquaintance. Fuller remarks, with some slyness, that "the many Chaucerisms used (for I will not say affected) by him are thought by the ignorant to be blemishes, known by the learned to be beauties, in his book; which notwithstanding had been more salable, if more conformed to our modern language." The grotesque, though it has its place as one of the instruments of poetical effect, is a dangerous element to handle. Spenser's age was very insensible to the presence and the dangers of the grotesque, and he was not before his time in feeling what was unpleasing in incongruous mixtures. Strong in the abundant but unsifted learning of his day, a style of learning which in his case was strangely inaccurate, he not only mixed the past with the present, fairyland with politics, mythology with the most serious Christian ideas, but he often mixed together the very features which are most discordant, in the colors, forms, and methods by which he sought to produce the effect of his pictures.

3. Another source of annoyance and disappointment is found in the imperfections and inconsistencies of the poet's standard of what is becoming to say and to write about. Exaggeration, diffuseness, prolixity, were the literary diseases of the age; an age of great excitement and hope, which had suddenly discovered its wealth and its powers, but not the rules of true economy in using them. With the classics open before it, and alive to much of the grandeur of their teaching, it was almost blind to the spirit of self-restraint, proportion, and simplicity which governed the great models. It was left to a later age to discern these and appreciate them. This unresisted proneness to exaggeration produced the extravagance and the horrors of the Elizabethan Drama, full, as it was, nevertheless, of insight and originality. It only too naturally led the earlier Spenser astray. What Dryden in one of his interesting critical prefaces says of himself is true of Spenser: "Thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject; to run them into verse, or to give them the other harmony of prose." There was in Spenser a facility for turning to account all material, original or borrowed, an incontinence of the descriptive faculty, which was ever ready to exercise itself on any object, the most unfitting and loathsome, as on the noblest, the purest, or the most beautiful. There are pictures in him which seem meant to turn our stomach. Worse than that, there are pictures which for a time rank the poet of *Holiness*

or *Temperance* with the painters who used their great art to represent at once the most sacred and holiest forms, and also scenes which few people now like to look upon in company—scenes and descriptions which may, perhaps from the habits of the time, have been playfully and innocently produced, but which it is certainly not easy to dwell upon innocently now. And apart from these serious faults, there is continually haunting us, amid incontestable richness, vigor, and beauty, a sense that the work is overdone. Spenser certainly did not want for humor and an eye for the ridiculous. There is no want in him, either, of that power of epigrammatic terseness which, in spite of its diffuseness, his age valued and cultivated. But when he gets on a story or a scene, he never knows where to stop. His duels go on stanza after stanza till there is no sound part left in either champion. His palaces, landscapes, pageants, feasts, are taken to pieces in all their parts, and all these parts are likened to some other things. "His abundance," says Mr. Craik, "is often oppressive; *it is like wading among unmown grass*." And he drowns us in words. His abundant and incongruous adjectives may sometimes, perhaps, startle us unfairly, because their associations and suggestions have quite altered; but very often they are the idle outpouring of an unrestrained affluence of language. The impression remains that he wants a due perception of the absurd, the unnatural, the unnecessary; that he does not care if he makes us smile, or does not know how to help it, when he tries to make us admire or sympathize.

Under this head comes a feature which the "charity of history" may lead us to treat as simple exaggeration, but which often suggests something less pardonable, in the great characters, political or literary, of Elizabeth's reign. This was the gross, shameless, lying flattery paid to the Queen. There is really nothing like it in history. It is unique as a phenomenon that proud, able, free-spoken men, with all their high instincts of what was noble and true, with all their admiration of the Queen's high qualities, should have offered it, even as an unmeaning custom; and that a proud and free-spoken people should not, in the very genuineness of their pride in her and their loyalty, have received it with shouts of derision and disgust. The flattery of Roman emperors and Roman Popes, if as extravagant, was not so personal. Even Louis XIV. was not celebrated in his dreary old age as a model of ideal beauty and a paragon of romantic perfection. It was no worship of a secluded and distant object of loyalty: the men who thus flattered knew perfectly well, often by painful experience, what Elizabeth was: able, indeed, high-spirited, successful, but ungrateful to her servants, capricious, vain, ill-tempered, unjust, and in her old age ugly. And yet the Gloriana of the *Faerie Queene*, the Empress of all nobleness—Belphœbe, the Princess of all sweetness and beauty—Britomart, the armed votaress of all purity—Mercilla, the lady of all compassion and grace—were but the reflections of the language in which it was then agreed upon by some of the greatest of Englishmen to speak, and to be supposed to think, of the Queen.

II. But when all these faults have been admitted, faults of design and faults of execution—and when it is admitted, further, that there is a general want of reality, substance, distinctness, and strength in the personages of the poem—that, compared with the contemporary drama, Spenser's knights and ladies and villains are thin and ghost-like, and that, as Daniel says, he

> "Paints shadows in imaginary lines—"

it yet remains that our greatest poets since his day have loved him and delighted in him. He had Shakspeare's praise. Cowley was made a poet by reading him. Dryden calls Milton "the poetical son of Spenser:' "Milton," he writes, "has acknowledged to me that Spenser was his original." Dryden's own homage to him is frequent and generous. Pope found as much pleasure in the *Faerie Queene* in his later years as he had found in reading it when he was twelve years old: and what Milton, Dryden, and Pope admired, Wordsworth too found full of nobleness, purity, and sweetness. What is it that gives the *Faerie Queene* its hold on those who appreciate the richness and music of English language, and who in temper and moral standard are quick to respond to English manliness and tenderness? The spell is to be found mainly in three things—(1) in the quaint stateliness of Spenser's imaginary world and its representatives; (2) in the beauty and melody of his numbers, the abundance and grace of his poetic ornaments, in the recurring and haunting rhythm of numberless passages, in which thought and imagery and language and melody are interwoven in one perfect and satisfying harmony; and (3) in the intrinsic nobleness of his general aim, his conception of human life, at once so exacting and so indulgent, his high ethical principles and ideals, his unfeigned honor for all that is pure and brave and unselfish and tender, his generous estimate of what is due from man to man of service, affection, and fidelity. His fictions embodied truths of character which, with all their shadowy incompleteness, were too real and too beautiful to lose their charm with time.

1. Spenser accepted from his age the quaint stateliness which is characteristic of his poem. His poetry is not simple and direct like that of the Greeks. It has not the exquisite finish and felicity of the best of the Latins. It has not the massive grandeur, the depth, the freedom, the shades and subtle complexities of feeling and motive which the English dramatists found by going straight to nature. It has the stateliness of highly artificial conditions of society, of the Court, the pageant, the tournament, as opposed to the majesty of the great events in human life and history, its real vicissitudes, its catastrophes, its tragedies, its revolutions, its sins. Throughout the prolonged crisis of Elizabeth's reign, her gay and dashing courtiers, and even her

serious masters of affairs, persisted in pretending to look on the world in which they lived as if through the side-scenes of a masque, and relieved against the background of a stage-curtain. Human life, in those days, counted for little; fortune, honor, national existence hung in the balance; the game was one in which the heads of kings and queens and great statesmen were the stakes—yet the players could not get out of their stiff and constrained costume, out of their artificial and fantastic figments of thought, out of their conceits and affectations of language. They carried it, with all their sagacity, with all their intensity of purpose, to the council-board and the judgment-seat. They carried it to the scaffold. The conventional supposition was that at the Court, though every one knew better, all was perpetual sunshine, perpetual holiday, perpetual triumph, perpetual love-making. It was the happy reign of the good and wise and lovely. It was the discomfiture of the base, the faithless, the wicked, the traitors. This is what is reflected in Spenser's poem; at once, its stateliness, for there was no want of grandeur and magnificence in the public scene ever before Spenser's imagination; and its quaintness, because the whole outward apparatus of representation was borrowed from what was past, or from what did not exist, and implied surrounding circumstances in ludicrous contrast with fact, and men taught themselves to speak in character, and prided themselves on keeping it up by substituting for the ordinary language of life and emotion a cumbrous and involved indirectness of speech.

And yet that quaint stateliness is not without its attractions. We have indeed to fit ourselves for it. But when we have submitted to its demands on our imagination, it carries us along as much as the fictions of the stage. The splendors of the artificial are not the splendors of the natural; yet the artificial has its splendors, which impress and captivate and repay. The grandeur of Spenser's poem is a grandeur like that of a great spectacle, a great array of the forces of a nation, a great series of military effects, a great ceremonial assemblage of all that is highest and most eminent in a country, a coronation, a royal marriage, a triumph, a funeral. So, though Spenser's knights and ladies do what no men ever could do, and speak what no man ever spoke, the procession rolls forward with a pomp which never forgets itself, and with an inexhaustible succession of circumstance, fantasy, and incident. Nor is it always solemn and high-pitched. Its gravity is relieved from time to time with the ridiculous figure or character, the ludicrous incident, the jests and antics of the buffoon. It has been said that Spenser never smiles. He not only smiles, with amusement or sly irony; he wrote what he must have laughed at as he wrote, and meant us to laugh at. He did not describe with a grave face the terrors and misadventures of the boaster Braggadochio and his Squire, whether or not a caricature of the Duke of Alençon and his "gentleman," the "petit singe," Simier. He did not write with a grave face the Irish row about the false Florimel (IV. 5):

"Then unto Satyran she was adjudged,
Who was right glad to gaine so goodly meed:
But Blandamour thereat full greatly grudged,
And litle prays'd his labours evill speed,
That for to winne the saddle lost the steed.
Ne lesse thereat did Paridell complaine,
And thought t' appeale from that which was decreed
To single combat with Sir Satyrane:
Thereto him Atè stird, new discord to maintaine.

"And eke, with these, full many other Knights
She through her wicked working did incense
Her to demaund and chalenge as their rights,
Deserved for their porils recompense.
Amongst the rest, with boastfull vaine pretense,
Stept Braggadochio forth, and as his thrall
Her claym'd, by him in battell wonne long sens:
Whereto her selfe he did to witnesse call:
Who, being askt, accordingly confessed all.

"Thereat exceeding wroth was Satyran;
And wroth with Satyran was Blandamour;
And wroth with Blandamour was Erivan;
And at them both Sir Paridell did loure.
So all together stird up strifull stoure,
And readie were new battell to darraine.
Each one profest to be her paramoure,
And vow'd with speare and shield it to maintaine;
Ne Judges powre, ne reasons rule, mote them restraine."

Nor the behavior of the "rascal many" at the sight of the dead Dragon (I. 12):

"And after all the raskall many ran,
Heaped together in rude rablement,
To see the face of that victorious man,
Whom all admired as from heaven sent,
And gazd upon with gaping wonderment;
But when they came where that dead Dragon lay,
Stretcht on the ground in monstrous large extent,
The sight with ydle feare did them dismay,
Ne durst approch him nigh to touch, or once assay.

"Some feard and fledd; some feard, and well it fayned;
One, that would wiser seeme than all the rest,
Warnd him not touch, for yet perhaps remaynd
Some lingring life within his hollow brest,
Or in his wombe might lurke some hidden nest
Of many Dragonettes, his fruitfull seede:
Another saide, that in his eyes did rest
Yet sparckling fyre, and badd thereof take heed;
Another said, he saw him move his eyes indeed.

"One mother, whenas her foolehardy chyld
Did come too neare, and with his talants play,
Halfe dead through feare, her little babe revyld,
And to her gossibs gan in counsell say;
'How can I tell, but that his talants may
Yet scratch my sonne, or rend his tender hand?'
So diversly them selves in vaine they fray;
Whiles some more bold to measure him nigh stand
To prove how many acres he did spred of land."

And his humor is not the less real that it affects serious argument, in the excuse which he urges for his fairy tales (II. 1):

> "Right well I wote, most mighty Soveraine,
> That all this famous antique history
> Of some th' aboundance of an ydle braine
> Will judged be, and painted forgery,
> Rather then matter of just memory;
> Sith none that breatheth living aire dees know
> Where is that happy land of Faery,
> Which I so much doe vaunt, yet no where show,
> But vouch antiquities, which no body can know.
>
> "But let that man with better sence advize,
> That of the world least part to us is red;
> And daily how through hardy enterprize
> Many great Regions are discovered,
> Which to late age were never mentioned.
> Who ever heard of th' Indian Peru?
> Or who in venturous vessell measured
> The Amazon huge river, now found trew?
> Or fruitfullest Virginia who did ever vew?
>
> "Yet all these were, when no man did them know,
> Yet have from wisest ages hidden beene;
> And later times thinges more unknowne shall show.
> Why then should witlesse man so much misweene,
> That nothing is but that which he hath seene?
> What if within the Moones fayre shining spheare,
> What if in every other starre unseene
> Of other worldes he happily should heare,
> He wonder would much more; yet such to some appeare."

The general effect is almost always lively and rich: all is buoyant and full of movement. That it is also odd, that we see strange costumes and hear a language often formal and obsolete, that we are asked to take for granted some very unaccustomed supposition and extravagant assumption, does not trouble us more than the usages and sights, so strange to ordinary civil life, of a camp, or a royal levée. All is in keeping, whatever may be the details of the pageant; they harmonize with the effect of the whole, like the gargoyles and quaint groups in a Gothic building harmonize with its general tone of majesty and subtle beauty;—nay, as ornaments, in themselves of bad taste, like much of the ornamentation of the Renaissance styles, yet find a not unpleasing place in compositions grandly and nobly designed:

> "So discord oft in music makes the sweeter lay."

Indeed, it is curious how much of real variety is got out of a limited number of elements and situations. The spectacle, though consisting only of knights, ladies, dwarfs, pagans, "salvage men," enchanters, and monsters, and other well-worn machinery of the books of chivalry, is ever new, full of vigor and fresh images, even if, as sometimes happens, it repeats itself. There is a majestic unconsciousness of all violations of probability, and of the strangeness of the combinations which it unrolls before us.

2. But there is not only stateliness: there is sweetness and beauty. Spenser's perception of beauty of all kinds was singularly and characteristically quick and sympathetic. It was one of his great gifts; perhaps the most special and unstinted. Except Shakspeare, who had it with other and greater gifts, no one in that time approached to Spenser, in feeling the presence of that commanding and mysterious idea, compounded of so many things, yet of which the true secret escapes us still, to which we give the name of beauty. A beautiful scene, a beautiful person, a beautiful poem, a mind and character with that combination of charms which, for want of another word, we call by that half-spiritual, half-material word "beautiful," at once set his imagination at work to respond to it and reflect it. His means of reflecting it were as abundant as his sense of it was keen. They were only too abundant. They often betrayed him by their affluence and wonderful readiness to meet his call. Say what we will, and a great deal may be said, of his lavish profusion, his heady and uncontrolled excess, in the richness of picture and imagery in which he indulges—still, there it lies before us, like the most gorgeous of summer gardens, in the glory and brilliancy of its varied blooms, in the wonder of its strange forms of life, in the changefulness of its exquisite and delicious scents. No one who cares for poetic beauty can be insensible to it. He may criticise it. He may have too much of it. He may prefer something more severe and chastened. He may observe on the waste of wealth and power. He may blame the prodigal expense of language, and the long spaces which the poet takes up to produce his effect. He may often dislike or distrust the moral aspect of the poet's impartial sensitiveness to all outward beauty—the impartiality which makes him throw all his strength into his pictures of Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, the Garden of Adonis, and Busirane's Masque of Cupid. But there is no gainsaying the beauty which never fails and disappoints, open the poem where you will. There is no gainsaying its variety, often so unexpected and novel. Face to face with the Epicurean idea of beauty and pleasure is the counter-charm of purity, truth, and duty. Many poets have done justice to each one separately. Few have shown, with such equal power, why it is that both have their roots in man's divided nature, and struggle, as it were, for the mastery. Which can be said to be the most exquisite in all beauty of imagination, of refined language, of faultless and matchless melody, of these two passages, in which the same image is used for the most opposite purposes;—first, in that song of temptation, the sweetest note in that description of Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, which, as a picture of the spells of pleasure, has never been surpassed; and next, to represent that stainless and glorious purity which is the professed object of his admiration and homage. In both the beauty of the rose furnishes the theme of the poet's treatment. In the first, it is the "lovely lay"

which meets the knight of Temperance amid the voluptuousness which he is come to assail and punish:

> "The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay:
> Ah! see, whoso fayre thing doest faine to see,
> In springing flowre the image of thy day.
> Ah! see the Virgin Rose, how sweetly shee
> Doth first peepe foorth with bashfull modestee,
> That fairer seemes the lesse ye see her may.
> Lo! see soone after how more bold and free
> Her bared bosome she doth broad display;
> Lo! see soone after how she fades and falls away.
>
> "So passeth, in the passing of a day,
> Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre;
> Ne more doth florish after first decay,
> That earst was sought to deck both bed and bowre
> Of many a lady, and many a Paramowre.
> Gather therefore the Rose whilest yet is prime,
> For soone comes age that will her pride deflowre;
> Gather the Rose of love whilest yet is time,
> Whilest loving thou mayst loved be with equall crime."

In the other, it images the power of the will—that power over circumstance and the storms of passion, to command obedience to reason and the moral law, which Milton sung so magnificently in *Comus*:

> "That daintie Rose, the daughter of her Morne,
> More deare then life she tendered, whose flowre
> The girlond of her honour did adorne:
> Ne suffred she the Middayes scorching powre,
> Ne the sharp Northerne wind thereon to showre;
> But lapped up her silken leaves most chayre,
> When so the froward skye began to lowre;
> But, soone as calmed was the crystall ayre,
> She did it fayre dispred and let to florish fayre.
>
> "Eternall God, in his almightie powre,
> To make ensample of his heavenly grace,
> In Paradize whylome did plant this flowre;
> Whence he it fetcht out of her native place,
> And did in stocke of earthly flesh enrace,
> That mortall men her glory should admyre.
> In gentle Ladies breste, and bounteous race
> Of woman kind, it fayrest Flowre doth spyre,
> And beareth fruit of honour and all chast desyre.
>
> "Fayre ymps of beautie, whose bright shining beames
> Adorne the worlde with like to heavenly light,
> And to your willes both royalties and Reames
> Subdew, through conquest of your wondrous might,
> With this fayre flowre your goodly girlonds dight
> Of chastity and vertue virginall,
> That shall embellish more your beautie bright,
> And crowne your heades with heavenly coronall,
> Such as the Angels weare before God's tribunall!"

This sense of beauty and command of beautiful expression is not seen only in the sweetness of which both these passages are examples, Its range is wide. Spenser had in his nature, besides sweetness, his full proportion of the stern and high manliness of his generation; indeed, he was not without its severity, its hardness, its unconsidering and cruel harshness, its contemptuous indifference to suffering and misery when on the wrong side. Noble and heroic ideals captivate him by their attractions. He kindles naturally and genuinely at what proves and draws out men's courage, their self-command, their self-sacrifice. He sympathizes as profoundly with the strangeness of their condition, with the sad surprises in their history and fate, as he gives himself up with little restraint to what is charming and even intoxicating in it. He can moralize with the best in terse and deep-reaching apophthegms of melancholy or even despairing experience. He can appreciate the mysterious depths and awful outlines of theology—of what our own age can see nothing in, but a dry and scholastic dogmatism. His great contemporaries were—more, perhaps, than the men of any age—many-sided. He shared their nature; and he used all that he had of sensitiveness and of imaginative and creative power, in bringing out its manifold aspects, and sometimes contradictory feelings and aims. Not that beauty, even varied beauty, is the uninterrupted attribute of his work. It alternates with much that no indulgence can call beautiful. It passes but too easily into what is commonplace, or forced, or unnatural, or extravagant, or careless and poor, or really coarse and bad. He was a negligent corrector. He only at times gave himself the trouble to condense and concentrate. But for all this, the *Faerie Queene* glows and is ablaze with beauty; and that beauty is so rich, so real, and so uncommon, that for its sake the severest readers of Spenser have pardoned much that is discordant with it—much that in the reading has wasted their time and disappointed them.

There is one portion of the beauty of the *Faerie Queene* which in its perfection and fulness had never yet been reached in English poetry. This was the music and melody of his verse. It was this wonderful, almost unfailing sweetness of numbers which probably as much as anything set the *Faerie Queene* at once above all contemporary poetry. The English language is really a musical one, and, say what people will, the English ear is very susceptible to the infinite delicacy and suggestiveness of musical rhythm and cadence. Spenser found the secret of it. The art has had many and consummate masters since, as different in their melody as in their thoughts from Spenser. And others at the time, Shakspeare pre-eminently, heard, only a little later, the same grandeur and the same subtle beauty in the sounds of their mother-tongue, only waiting the artist's skill to be combined and harmonized into strains of mysterious fascination. But Spenser was the first to show that he had acquired a command over what had hitherto been heard only in exquisite fragments, passing too soon into roughness and confusion. It would be too much to say that his cunning never fails, that his ear is never dull or off its guard. But when the length and magnitude of the composition are considered, with the restraints imposed by the new nine-line stanza, however convenient it may have been, the vigor, the invention, the volume and rush of language, and the keenness and truth of ear amid its diversified tasks, are indeed admirable which could keep up so prolonged and so majestic a stream of original and varied poetical melody. If his stanzas are monotonous, it is with the grand monotony of the sea-shore, where billow follows billow, each swelling diversely, and broken into different curves and waves upon its mounting surface, till at last it falls over, and spreads and rushes up in a last long line of foam upon the beach.

3. But all this is but the outside shell and the fancy framework in which the substance of the poem is enclosed. Its substance is the poet's philosophy of life. It shadows forth, in type and parable, his ideal of the perfection of the human character, with its special features, its trials, its achievements. There were two accepted forms in poetry in which this had been done by poets. One was under the image of warfare; the other was under the image of a journey or voyage. Spenser chose the former, as Dante and Bunyan chose the latter. Spenser looks on the scene of the world as a continual battle-field. It was such, in fact, to his experience in Ireland, testing the mettle of character, its loyalty, its sincerity, its endurance. His picture of character is by no means painted with sentimental tenderness. He portrays it in the rough work of the struggle and the toil, always hardly tested by trial, often overmatched, deceived, defeated, and even delivered by its own default to disgrace and captivity. He had full before his eyes what abounded in the society of his day, often in its noblest representatives—the strange perplexing mixture of the purer with the baser elements, in the high-tempered and aspiring activity of his time. But it was an ideal of character which had in it high aims and serious purposes, which was armed with fortitude and strength, which could recover itself after failure and defeat.

The unity of a story, or an allegory—that chain and backbone of continuous interest, implying a progress and leading up to a climax, which holds together the great poems of the world, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the *Æneid*, the *Commedia*, the *Paradise Lost*, the *Jerusalem Delivered*—this is wanting in the *Faerie Queene*. The unity is one of character and its ideal. That character of the completed man, raised above what is poor and low, and governed by noble tempers and pure principles, has in Spenser two conspicuous elements. In the first place, it is based on manliness. In the personages which illustrate the different virtues—Holiness, Justice, Courtesy, and the rest—the distinction is not in nicely discriminated features or shades of expression, but in the trials and the occasions which call forth a particular action or effort: yet the manliness which is at the foundation of all that is good in them is a universal quality common to them all, rooted and imbedded in the governing idea or standard of moral character in the poem. It is not merely courage, it is not merely energy, it is not merely strength. It is the quality of soul which frankly accepts the conditions in human life, of labor, of obedience, of effort, of unequal success, which does not quarrel with them or evade them, but takes for granted with unquestioning alacrity that man is called—by his call to high aims and destiny—to a continual struggle with difficulty, with pain, with evil, and makes it the point of honor not to be dismayed or wearied out by them. It is a cheerful and serious willingness for hard work and endurance, as being inevitable and very bearable necessities, together with even a pleasure in encountering trials which put a man on his mettle, an enjoyment of the contest and the risk, even in play. It is the quality which seizes on the paramount idea of duty, as something which leaves a man no choice; which despises and breaks through the inferior considerations and motives—trouble, uncertainty, doubt, curiosity—which hang about and impede duty; which is impatient with the idleness and childishness of a life of mere amusement, or mere looking on, of continued and self-satisfied levity, of vacillation, of clever and ingenious trifling. Spenser's manliness is quite consistent with long pauses of rest, with intervals of change, with great craving for enjoyment—nay, with great lapses from its ideal, with great mixtures of selfishness, with coarseness, with licentiousness, with injustice and inhumanity. It may be fatally diverted into bad channels; it may degenerate into a curse and scourge to the world. But it stands essentially distinct from the nature which shrinks from difficulty, which is appalled at effort, which has no thought of making an impression on things around it, which is content with passively receiving influences and distinguishing between emotions, which feels no call to exert itself, because it recognizes no aim valuable enough to rouse it, and no obligation strong enough to command it. In the character of his countrymen round him, in its highest and in its worst features, in its noble ambition, its daring enterprise, its self-devotion, as well as in its pride, its intolerance, its fierce self-will, its arrogant claims of superiority—moral, political, religious—Spenser saw the example of that strong and resolute manliness which, once set on great things, feared nothing—neither toil nor disaster nor danger—in their pursuit. Naturally and unconsciously, he laid it at the bottom of all his portraitures of noble and virtuous achievement in the *Faerie Queene*.

All Spenser's "virtues" spring from a root of manliness. Strength, simplicity of aim, elevation of spirit, courage are presupposed as their necessary conditions. But they have with him another condition as universal. They all grow and are nourished from the soil of love; the love of beauty, the love and service of fair women. This, of course, is a survival from the ages of chivalry, an inheritance bequeathed from the minstrels of France, Italy, and Germany to the rising poetry of Europe. Spenser's types of manhood are imperfect without the idea of an absorbing and overmastering passion of love; without a devotion, as to the principal and most worthy object of life, to the service of a beautiful lady, and to winning her affection and grace. The influence of this view of life comes out in numberless ways. Love comes on the scene in shapes which are exquisitely beautiful, in all its purity, its tenderness, its unselfishness. But the claims of its all-ruling and irresistible might are also only too readily verified in the passions of men; in the follies of love, its entanglements, its mischiefs, its foulness. In one shape or another it meets us at every turn; it is never absent; it is the motive and stimulant of the whole activity of the poem. The picture of life held up before us is the literal rendering of Coleridge's lines:

> "All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
> Are all but ministers of Love,
> And feed his sacred flame."

We still think with Spenser about the paramount place of manliness, as the foundation of all worth in human character. We have ceased to think with him about the rightful supremacy of love, even in the imaginative conception of human life. We have ceased to recognize in it the public claims of almost a religion, which it has in Spenser. Love will ever play a great part in human life to the end of time. It will be an immense element in its happiness, perhaps a still greater one in its sorrows, its disasters, its tragedies. It is still an immense power in shaping and coloring it, both in fiction and reality; in the family, in the romance, in the fatalities and the prosaic ruin of vulgar fact. But the place given to it by Spenser is to our thoughts and feelings even ludicrously extravagant. An enormous change has taken place in the ideas of society on this point: it is one of the things which make a wide chasm between centuries and generations which yet are of "the same passions," and have in temper, tradition, and language so much in common. The ages of the Courts of Love, whom Chaucer reflected, and whose ideas passed on through him to Spenser, are to us simply strange and abnormal states through which society has passed, to us beyond understanding and almost belief. The perpetual love-making, as one of the first duties and necessities of a noble life, the space which it must fill in the cares and thoughts of all gentle and high-reaching spirits, the unrestrained language of admiration and worship, the unrestrained yielding to the impulses, the anxieties, the pitiable despair and agonies of love, the subordination to it of all other pursuits and aims, the weeping and wailing and self-torturing which it involves, all this is so far apart from what we know of actual life, the life not merely of work and business, but the life of affection, and even of passion, that it makes the picture of which it is so necessary a part seem to us in the last degree unreal, unimaginable, grotesquely ridiculous. The quaint love sometimes found among children, so quickly kindled, so superficial, so violent in its language and absurd in its plans, is transferred with the utmost gravity to the serious proceedings of the wise and good. In the highest characters it is chastened, refined, purified: it appropriates, indeed, language due only to the divine, it almost simulates idolatry, yet it belongs to the best part of man's nature. But in the lower and average characters it is not so respectable; it is apt to pass into mere toying pastime and frivolous love of pleasure: it astonishes us often by the readiness with which it displays an affinity for the sensual and impure, the corrupting and debasing sides of the relations between the sexes. But however it appears, it is throughout a very great affair, not merely with certain persons, or under certain circumstances, but with every one: it obtrudes itself in public, as the natural and recognized motive of plans of life and trials of strength; it is the great spur of enterprise, and its highest and most glorious reward. A world of which this is the law, is not even in fiction a world which we can conceive possible, or with which experience enables us to sympathize.

It is, of course, a purely artificial and conventional reading of the facts of human life and feeling, Such conventional readings and renderings belong in a measure to all art; but in its highest forms they are corrected, interpreted, supplemented by the presence of interspersed realities which every one recognizes. But it was one of Spenser's disadvantages, that too strong influences combined to entangle him in this fantastic and grotesque way of exhibiting the play and action of the emotions of love. This all-absorbing, all-embracing passion of love, at least this way of talking about it, was the fashion of the Court. Further, it was the fashion of poetry, which he inherited; and he was not the man to break through the strong bands of custom and authority. In very much he was an imitator. He took what he found; what was his own was his treatment of it. He did not trouble himself with inconsistencies, or see absurdities and incongruities. Habit and familiar language made it not strange that in the Court of Elizabeth the most high-flown sentiments should be in every one's mouth about the sublimities and refinements of love, while every one was busy with keen ambition and unscrupulous intrigue. The same blinding power kept him from seeing the monstrous contrast between the claims of the queen to be the ideal of womanly purity—claims recognized and echoed in ten thousand extravagant compliments—and the real licentiousness common all round her among her favorites. All these strange contradictions, which surprise and shock us, Spenser assumed as natural. He built up his fictions on them, as the dramatist built on a basis which, though more nearly approaching to real life, yet differed widely from it in many of its preliminary and collateral suppositions; or as the novelist builds up his on a still closer adherence to facts and experience. In this matter Spenser appears with a kind of double self. At one time he speaks as one penetrated and inspired by the highest and purest ideas of love, and filled with aversion and scorn for the coarser forms of passion—for what is ensnaring and treacherous, as well as for what is odious and foul. At another, he puts forth all his power to bring out its most dangerous and even debasing aspects in highly-colored pictures, which none could paint without keen sympathy with what he takes such pains to made vivid and fascinating. The combination is not like anything modern, for both the elements are in Spenser so unquestionably and simply genuine. Our modern poets are, with all their variations in this respect, more homogeneous; and where one conception of love and beauty has taken hold of a man, the other does not easily come in. It is impossible to imagine Wordsworth dwelling with zest on visions and imagery on which Spenser has lavished all his riches. There can be no doubt of Byron's real habits of thought and feeling on subjects of this kind, even when his language for the occasion is the chastest; we detect in it the mood of the moment, perhaps spontaneous, perhaps put on, but in contradiction to the whole movement of the man's true nature. But Spenser's words do not ring hollow. With a kind of unconsciousness and innocence, which we now find hard to understand, and which, perhaps, belongs to the early childhood or boyhood of a literature, he passes abruptly from one standard of thought and feeling to another; and is quite as much in earnest when he is singing the pure joys of chastened affections, as he is when he is writing with almost riotous luxuriance what we are at this day ashamed to read. Tardily, indeed, he appears to have acknowledged the contradiction. At the instance of two noble ladies of the Court, he composed two Hymns of Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beauty, to "retract" and "reform" two earlier ones composed in praise of earthly love and beauty. But, characteristically, he published the two pieces together, side by side in the same volume.

In the *Faerie Queene*, Spenser has brought out, not the image of the great Gloriana, but in its various aspects a form of character which was then just coming on the stage of the world, and which has played a great part in it since. As he has told us, he aimed at presenting before us, in the largest sense of the word, the English gentleman. It was, as a whole, a new character in the world. It had not really existed in the days of feudalism and chivalry, though features of it had appeared, and its descent was traced from those times: but they were too wild and coarse, too turbulent and disorderly, for a character which, however ready for adventure and battle, looked to peace, refinement, order, and law as the true conditions of its perfection. In the days of Elizabeth it was beginning to fill a large place in English life. It was formed amid the increasing cultivation of the nation, the increasing varieties of public service, the awakening responsibilities to duty and calls to self-command. Still making much of the prerogative of noble blood and family honors, it was something independent of nobility and beyond it. A nobleman might have in him the making of a gentleman: but it was the man himself of whom the gentleman was made. Great birth, even great capacity, were not enough; there must be added a new delicacy of conscience, a new appreciation of what is beautiful and worthy of honor, a new measure of the strength and nobleness of self-control, of devotion to unselfish interests. This idea of manhood, based not only on force and courage, but on truth, on refinement, on public spirit, on soberness and modesty, on consideration for others, was taking possession of the younger generation of Elizabeth's middle years. Of course the idea was very imperfectly apprehended, still more imperfectly realized. But it was something which on the same scale had not been yet, and which was to be the seed of something greater. It was to grow into those strong, simple, noble characters, pure in aim and devoted to duty, the Falklands, the Hampdens, who amid so much evil form such a remarkable feature in the Civil Wars, both on the Royalist and the Parliamentary sides. It was to grow into that high type of cultivated English nature, in the present and the last century, common both to its monarchical and its democratic embodiments, than which, with all its faults and defects, our western civilization has produced few things more admirable.

There were three distinguished men of that time, who one after another were Spenser's friends and patrons, and who were men in whom he saw realized his conceptions of human excellence and nobleness. They were Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Grey of Wilton, and Sir Walter Ralegh: and the *Faerie Queene* reflects, as in a variety of separate mirrors and spiritualized forms, the characteristics of these men and of such as they. It reflects their conflicts, their temptations, their weaknesses, the evils they fought with, the superiority with which they towered over meaner and poorer natures. Sir Philip Sidney may be said to have been the first typical example in English society of the true gentleman. The charm which attracted men to him in life, the fame which he left behind him, are not to be accounted for simply by his accomplishments as a courtier, a poet, a lover of literature, a gallant soldier; above all this, there was something not found in the strong or brilliant men about him, a union and harmony of all high qualities differing from any of them separately, which gave a fire of its own to his literary enthusiasm, and a sweetness of its own to his courtesy. Spenser's admiration for that bright but short career was strong and lasting. Sidney was to him a verification of what he aspired to and imagined; a pledge that he was not dreaming, in portraying Prince Arthur's greatness of soul, the religious chivalry of the Red Cross Knight of Holiness, the manly purity and self-control of Sir Guyon. It is too much to say that in Prince Arthur, the hero of the poem, he always intended Sidney. In the first place, it is clear that under that character Spenser in places pays compliments to Leicester, in whose service he began life, and whose claims on his homage he ever recognized. Prince Arthur is certainly Leicester, in the historical passages in the Fifth Book relating to the war in the Low Countries in 1576: and no one can be meant but Leicester in the bold allusion in the First Book (ix. 17) to Elizabeth's supposed thoughts of marrying him. In the next place, allegory, like caricature, is not bound to make the same person and the same image always or perfectly coincide; and Spenser makes full use of this liberty. But when he was painting the picture of the Kingly Warrior, in whom was to be summed up in a magnificent unity the diversified graces of other men, and who was to be ever ready to help and support his fellows in their hour of need, and in their conflict with evil, he certainly had before his mind the well-remembered lineaments of Sidney's high and generous nature. And he further dedicated a separate book, the last that he completed, to the celebration of Sidney's special "virtue" of Courtesy. The martial strain of the poem changes once more to the pastoral of the *Shepherd's Calendar* to describe Sidney's wooing of Frances Walsingham, the fair Pastorella; his conquests, by his sweetness and grace, over the churlishness of rivals; and his triumphant war against the monster spirit of ignorant and loud-tongued insolence, the "Blatant Beast" of religious, political, and social slander.

Again, in Lord Grey of Wilton, gentle by nature, but so stern in the hour of trial, called reluctantly to cope not only with anarchy, but with intrigue and disloyalty, finding selfishness and thanklessness everywhere, but facing all and doing his best with a heavy heart, and ending his days prematurely under detraction and disgrace, Spenser had before him a less complete character than Sidney, but yet one of grand and severe manliness, in which were conspicuous a religious hatred of disorder, and an unflinching sense of public duty. Spenser's admiration of him was sincere and earnest. In this case the allegory almost becomes history. Arthur, Lord Grey, is Sir Arthegal, the Knight of Justice. The story touches, apparently, on some passages of his career, when his dislike of the French marriage placed him in opposition to the Queen, and even for a time threw him with the supporters of Mary. But the adventures of Arthegal mainly preserve the memory of Lord Grey's terrible exploits against wrong and rebellion in Ireland. These exploits are represented in the doings of the iron man Talus, his squire, with his destroying flail, swift, irresistible, inexorable; a figure borrowed and altered, after Spenser's wont, from a Greek legend. His overthrow of insolent giants, his annihilation of swarming "rascal routs," idealize and glorify that unrelenting policy, of which, though condemned in England, Spenser continued to be the advocate. In the story of Arthegal, long separated by undeserved misfortunes from the favor of the armed lady, Britomart, the virgin champion of right, of whom he was so worthy, doomed in spite of his honors to an early death, and assailed on his return from his victorious service by the furious insults of envy and malice, Spenser portrays, almost without a veil, the hard fate of the unpopular patron whom he to the last defended and honored.

Ralegh, his last protector, the Shepherd of the Ocean, to whose judgment he referred the work of his life, and under whose guidance he once more tried the quicksands of the Court, belonged to a different class from Sidney or Lord Grey; but of his own class he was the consummate and matchless example. He had not Sidney's fine enthusiasm and nobleness; he had not either Sidney's affectations. He had not Lord Grey's single-minded hatred of wrong. He was a man to whom his own interests were much; he was unscrupulous; he was ostentatious; he was not above stooping to mean, unmanly compliances with the humors of the Queen. But he was a man with a higher ideal than he attempted to follow. He saw, not without cynical scorn, through the shows and hollowness of the world. His intellect was of that clear and unembarrassed power which takes in as wholes things which other men take in part by part. And he was in its highest form a representative of that spirit of adventure into the unknown and the wonderful of which Drake was the coarser and rougher example, realizing in serious earnest, on the sea and in the New World, the life of knight-errantry feigned in romances. With Ralegh, as with Lord Grey, Spenser comes to history; and he even seems to have been moved, as the poem went on, partly by pity, partly by amusement, to shadow forth in his imaginary world, not merely Ralegh's brilliant qualities, but also his frequent misadventures and mischances in his career at Court. Of all her favorites, Ralegh was the one whom his wayward mistress seemed to find most delight in tormenting. The offence which he gave by his secret marriage suggested the scenes describing the utter desolation of Prince Arthur's squire, Timias, at the jealous wrath of the Virgin Huntress, Belphœbe—scenes which, extravagant as they are, can hardly be called a caricature of Ralegh's real behavior in the Tower in 1593. But Spenser is not satisfied with this one picture. In the last Book, Timias appears again, the victim of slander and ill-usage, even after he had recovered Belphœbe's favor; he is bated like a wild bull, by mighty powers of malice, falsehood, and calumny; he is wounded by the tooth of the Blatant Beast; and after having been cured, not without difficulty, and not without significant indications on the part of the poet that his friend had need to restrain and chasten his unruly spirit, he is again delivered over to an ignominious captivity, and the insults of Disdain and Scorn.

> "Then up he made him rise, and forward fare,
> Led in a rope which both his hands did bynd;
> Ne ought that foole for pity did him spare,
> But with his whip, him following behynd,
> Him often scourg'd, and forst his feete to fynd:
> And other-whiles with bitter mockes and mowes
> He would him scorne, that to his gentle mynd
> Was much more grievous then the others blowes:
> Words sharpely wound, but greatest griefe of scorning growes."

Spenser knew Ralegh only in the promise of his adventurous prime—so buoyant and fearless, so inexhaustible in project and resource, so unconquerable by checks and reverses. The gloomier portion of

Raleigh's career was yet to come: its intrigues, its grand yet really gambling and unscrupulous enterprises, the long years of prison and authorship, and its not unfitting close, in the English statesman's death by the headsman—so tranquil though violent, so ceremoniously solemn, so composed, so dignified—such a contrast to all other forms of capital punishment, then or since.

Spenser has been compared to Pindar, and contrasted with Cervantes. The contrast, in point of humor, and the truth that humor implies, in favorable to the Spaniard: in point of moral earnestness and sense of poetic beauty, to the Englishman. What Cervantes only thought ridiculous, Spenser used, and not in vain, for a high purpose. The ideas of knight-errantry were really more absurd than Spenser allowed himself to see. But that idea of the gentleman which they suggested, that picture of human life as a scene of danger, trial, effort, defeat, recovery, which they lent themselves to image forth, was more worth insisting on, than the exposure of their folly and extravagance. There was nothing to be made of them, Cervantes thought; and nothing to be done, but to laugh off what they had left, among living Spaniards, of pompous imbecility or mistaken pretensions. Spenser, knowing that they must die, yet believed that out of them might be raised something nobler and more real—enterprise, duty, resistance to evil, refinement, hatred of the mean and base. The energetic and high-reaching manhood which he saw in the remarkable personages round him he shadowed forth in the *Faerie Queene.* He idealized the excellences and the trials of this first generation of English gentlemen, as Bunyan afterwards idealized the piety, the conflicts, and the hopes of Puritan religion. Neither were universal types; neither were perfect. The manhood in which Spenser delights, with all that was admirable and attractive in it, had still much of boyish incompleteness and roughness: it had noble aims, it had generosity, it had loyalty, it had a very real reverence for purity and religion; but it was young in experience of a new world, it was wanting in self-mastery, it was often pedantic and self-conceited; it was an easier prey than it ought to have been to discreditable temptations. And there is a long interval between any of Spenser's superficial and thin conceptions of character, and such deep and subtle creations as Hamlet or Othello, just as Bunyan's strong but narrow ideals of religion, true as they are up to a certain point, fall short of the length and breadth and depth of what Christianity has made of man, and may yet make of him. But in the ways which Spenser chose, he will always delight and teach us. The spectacle of what is heroic and self-devoted, of honor for principle and truth, set before us with so much insight and sympathy, aad combined with so much just and broad observation on those accidents and conditions of our mortal state which touch us all, will never appeal to English readers in vain, till we have learned a new language, and adopted new canons of art, of taste, and of morals. It is not merely that he has left imperishable images which have taken their place among the consecrated memorials of poetry and the household thoughts of all cultivated men. But he has permanently lifted the level of English poetry by a great and sustained effort of rich and varied art, in which one main purpose rules, loyalty to what is noble and pure, and in which this main purpose subordinates to itself every feature and every detail, and harmonizes some that by themselves seem least in keeping with it.

CHAPTER VI.

SECOND PART OF THE FAERIE QUEENE.—SPENSER'S LAST YEARS.

[1590–1599.]

THE publication of the *Faerie Queene* in 1590 had made the new poet of the *Shepherd's Calendar* a famous man. He was no longer merely the favorite of a knot of enthusiastic friends, and outside of them only recognized and valued at his true measure by such judges as Sidney and Ralegh. By the common voice of all the poets of his time he was now acknowledged as the first of living English poets. It is not easy for us who live in these late times and are familiar with so many literary masterpieces, to realize the surprise of a first and novel achievement in literature; the effect on an age, long and eagerly seeking after poetical expression, of the appearance at last of a work of such power, richness, and finished art.

It can scarcely be doubted, I think, from the bitter sarcasms interspersed in his later poems, that Spenser expected more from his triumph than it brought him. It opened no way of advancement for him in England. He continued for a while in that most ungrateful and unsatisfactory employment, the service of the State in Ireland; and that he relinquished in 1593.* At the end of 1591 he was again at Kilcolman. He had written and probably sent to Ralegh, though he did not publish it till 1595, the record already quoted of the last two years' events, *Colin Clout's come home again*—his visit, under Ralegh's guidance, to the Court, his thoughts and recollections of its great ladies, his generous criticisms on poets, the people and courtiers whom he had seen and heard of; how he had been dazzled, how he had been disenchanted, and how he was come home to his Irish mountains and streams and lakes, to enjoy their beauty, though in a "salvage" and "foreign" land; to find in this peaceful and tranquil retirement something far better than the heat of ambition and the intrigues of envious rivalries; and to contrast with the profanations of the name of love which had disgusted him in a dissolute society, the higher and purer ideal of it which he could honor and pursue in the simplicity of his country life.

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* Who is *Edmondus Spenser*, *Prebendary of Effin* (Elphin)? in a list of arrears of first-fruits; Calendar of State Papers, *Ireland*, Dec. 8, 1586, p. 222. Church preferments were under special circumstances allowed to be held by laymen. See the Queen's "Instructions," 1579; in Preface to Calendar of Carew MSS. 1589–1600, p. ci.

And in Ireland the rejected adorer of the Rosalind of the *Shepherd's Calendar* found another and still more perfect Rosalind, who, though she was at first inclined to repeat the cruelty of the earlier one, in time relented, and received such a dower of poetic glory as few poets have bestowed upon their brides. It has always appeared strange that Spenser's passion for the first Rosalind should have been so lasting, that in his last pastoral, *Colin Clout's come home again*, written so late as 1591, and published after he was married, he should end his poem by reverting to this long-past love passage, defending her on the ground of her incomparable excellence and his own unworthiness, against the blame of friendly "shepherds," witnesses of the "languors of his too long dying," and angry with her hard-heartedness. It may be that, according to Spenser's way of making his masks and figures suggest but not fully express their antitypes,* Rosalind here bears the image of the real mistress of this time, the "country lass," the Elizabeth of the sonnets, who was, in fact, for a while as unkind as the earlier Rosalind. The history of this later wooing, its hopes and anguish, its varying currents, its final unexpected success, is the subject of a collection of Sonnets, which have the disadvantage of provoking comparison with the Sonnets of Shakspeare. There is no want in them of grace and sweetness, and they ring true with genuine feeling and warm affection, though they have, of course, their share of the conceits then held proper for love poems. But they want the power and fire, as well as the perplexing mystery, of those of the greater master. His bride was also immortalized as a fourth among the three Graces, in a richly-painted passage in the last book of the *Faerie Queene*. But the most magnificent tribute to her is the great Wedding Ode, the *Epithalamion*, the finest composition of its kind, probably, in any language: so impetuous and unflagging, so orderly and yet so rapid in the onward march of its stately and varied stanzas; so passionate, so flashing with imaginative wealth, yet so refined and self-restrained. It was always easy for Spenser to open the floodgates of his inexhaustible fancy. With him,

> "The numbers flow as fast as spring doth rise."

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* In these kind of historical allusions Spenser usually perplexes the subject: he leads you on, and then designedly misleads you."—Upton, quoted by Craik, iii. p. 9*.

But here he has thrown into his composition all his power of concentration, of arrangement, of strong and harmonious government over thought and image, over language and measure and rhythm; and the result is unquestionably one of the grandest lyrics in English poetry. We have learned to think the subject unfit for such free poetical treatment; Spenser's age did not.

Of the lady of whom all this was said, and for whom all this was written, the family name has not been thought worth preserving. We know that by her Christian name she was a namesake of the great queen, and of Spenser's mother, She is called a country lass, which may mean anything; and the marriage appears to have been solemnized in Cork on what was then Midsummer Day, "Barnaby the Bright," the day when "the sun is in his cheerful height," June $\frac{11}{22}$, 1594. Except that she survived Spenser, that she married again, and had some legal quarrels with one of her own sons about his lands, we know nothing more about her. Of two of the children whom she brought him, the names have been preserved, and they indicate that in spite of love and poetry, and the charms of Kilcolman, Spenser felt as Englishmen feel in Australia or in India. To call one of them *Sylvanus*, and the other *Peregrine*, reveals to us that Ireland was still to him a "salvage land," and he a pilgrim and stranger in it; as Moses called his first-born Gershom, a stranger here—"for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land."

In a year after his marriage, he sent over these memorials of it to be published in London, and they were entered at Stationers' Hall, in November, 1595. The same year he came over himself, bringing with him the second instalment of the *Faerie Queene*, which was entered for publication the following January, 159$\frac{5}{6}$. Thus the half of the projected work was finished; and finished, as we know from one of the Sonnets (80), before his marriage. After his long "race through Fairy land," he asks leave to rest, and solace himself with his "love's sweet praise;" and then "as a steed refreshed after toil," he will "stoutly that second worke assoyle." The first six books were published together in 1596. He remained most of the year in London, during which *The Four Hymns on Love and Beauty*, *Earthly and Heavenly*, were published; and also a Dirge (*Daphnaida*) on Douglas Howard, the wife of Arthur Gorges, the spirited narrator of the Island Voyage of Essex and Ralegh, written in 1591; and a "spousal verse" (*Prothalamion*), on the marriage of the two daughters of the Earl of Worcester, late in 1596. But he was only a visitor in London. The *Prothalamion* contains a final record of his disappointments in England.

> "I, (whom sullein care,
> Through discontent of my long fruitlesse stay
> In Princes Court, and expectation vayne
> Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away,
> Like empty shaddowes, did afflict my brayne,)
> Walkt forth to ease my payne
> Along the shoare of silver streaming Themmes—"

His marriage ought to have made him happy. He professed to find the highest enjoyment in the quiet and retirement of country life. He was in the prime of life, successful beyond all his fellows in his special work, and apparently with unabated interest in what remained to be done of it. And though he could not but feel himself at a distance from the "sweet civility" of England, and socially at disadvantage compared to those whose lines had fallen to them in its pleasant places, yet nature, which he loved so well, was still friendly to him, if men were wild and dangerous. He is never weary of praising the natural advantages of Ireland. Speaking of the North, he says—

> "And sure it is yet a most beautifull and sweet countrey as any is under heaven, seamed throughout with many goodly rivers, replenished with all sortes of fish, most aboundantly sprinckled with many sweet Ilandes, and goodly lakes, like litle Inland Seas, that will carry even ships upon theyr waters, adorned with goodly woodes fitt for building of howses and shippes, soe comodiously, as that yf some princes in the world had them, they would soone hope to be lordes of all the seas, and ere long of all the world; also full of good portes and havens opening upon England and Scotland, as inviting us to come to them, to see what excellent comodityes that countrey can affoord, besides the soyle it self most fertile, fitt to yeeld all kind of fruite that shal be comitted thereunto. And lastly, the heavens most milde and temperat, though somewhat more moyst then the part toward the West."

His own home at Kilcolman charmed and delighted him. It was not his fault that its trout streams, its Mulla and Fanchin, are not as famous as Walter Scott's Teviot and Tweed, or Wordsworth's Yarrow and Duddon, or that its hills, Old Mole, and Arlo Hill, have not kept a poetic name like Helvellyn and "Eildon's triple height." They have failed to become familiar names to us. But the beauties of his home inspired more than one sweet pastoral picture in the *Faerie Queene*; and in the last fragment remaining to us of it, he celebrates his mountains and woods and valleys as once the fabled resort of the Divine Huntress and her Nymphs, and the meeting-place of the Gods.

There was one drawback to the enjoyment of his Irish country life, and of the natural attractiveness of Kilcolman. "Who knows not Arlo Hill?" he exclaims, in the scene just referred to from the fragment on *Mutability*. "Arlo, the best and fairest hill in all the holy island's heights." It was well known to all Englishmen who had to do with the South of Ireland. How well it was known in the Irish history of the time, may be seen in the numerous references to it, under various forms, such as Aharlo, Harlow, in the Index to the Irish Calendar of Papers of this troublesome date, and to continual encounters and ambushes in its notoriously dangerous woods. He means by it the highest part of the Galtee range, below which to the north, through a glen or defile, runs the "river Aherlow." Galtymore, the summit, rises, with precipice and gully, more than 3000 feet above the plains of Tipperary, and is seen far and wide. It was connected with the "great wood," the wild region of forest, mountain, and bog which stretched half across Munster from the Suir to the

Shannon. It was the haunt and fastness of Irish outlawry and rebellion in the South, which so long sheltered Desmond and his followers. Arlo and its "fair forests," harboring "thieves and wolves," was an uncomfortable neighbor to Kilcolman. The poet describes it as ruined by a curse pronounced on the lovely land by the offended goddess of the Chase—

> "Which too, too true that land's in-dwellers since have found."

He was not only living in an insecure part, on the very border of disaffection and disturbance, but, like every Englishman living in Ireland, he was living amid ruins. An English home in Ireland, however fair, was a home on the sides of Ætna or Vesuvius: it stood where the lava flood had once passed, and upon not distant fires. Spenser has left us his thoughts on the condition of Ireland, in a paper written between the two rebellions, some time between 1595 and 1598, after the twelve or thirteen years of so-called peace which followed the overthrow of Desmond, and when Tyrone's rebellion was becoming serious. It seems to have been much copied in manuscript, but, though entered for publication in 1598, it was not printed till long after his death, in 1633. A copy of it among the Irish papers of 1598 shows that it had come under the eyes of the English Government. It is full of curious observations, of shrewd political remarks, of odd and confused ethnography; but more than all this, it is a very vivid and impressive picture of what Sir Walter Ralegh called "the common woe of Ireland." It is a picture of a noble realm, which its inhabitants and its masters did not know what to do with; a picture of hopeless mistakes, misunderstandings, misrule; a picture of piteous misery and suffering on the part of a helpless and yet untamable and mischievous population—of unrelenting and scornful rigor on the part of their stronger rulers, which yet was absolutely ineffectual to reclaim or subdue them. "Men of great wisdom," Spenser writes, "have often wished that all that land were a sea-pool." Everything, people thought, had been tried, and tried in vain.

> "Marry, soe there have beene divers good plottes and wise counsells cast alleready about reformation of that realme; but they say, it is the fatall desteny of that land, that noe purposes, whatsoever are meant for her good, will prosper or take good effect, which, whether it proceede from the very GENIUS of the soyle, or influence of the starres, or that Allmighty God hath not yet appoynted the time of her reformation, or that He reserveth her in this unquiett state still for some secrett scourdge, which shall by her come unto England, it is hard to be knowen, but yet much to be feared."

The unchanging fatalities of Ireland appear in Spenser's account in all their well-known forms; some of them, as if they were what we were reading of yesterday. Throughout the work there is an honest zeal for order, an honest hatred of falsehood, sloth, treachery, and disorder. But there does not appear a trace of consideration for what the Irish might feel or desire or resent. He is sensible, indeed, of

English mismanagement and vacillation, of the way in which money and force were wasted by not being boldly and intelligently employed; he enlarges on that power of malignity and detraction which he has figured in the Blatant Beast of the *Faerie Queene*: but of English cruelty, of English injustice, of English rapacity, of English prejudice, he is profoundly unconscious. He only sees that things are getting worse and more dangerous; and though he, like others, has his "plot" for the subjugation and pacification of the island, and shrinks from nothing in the way of severity, not even, if necessary, from extermination, his outlook is one of deep despair. He calculates the amount of force, of money, of time, necessary to break down all resistance; he is minute and perhaps skilful in building his forts and disposing his garrisons; he is very earnest about the necessity of cutting broad roads through the woods, and building bridges in place of fords; he contemplates restored churches, parish schools, a better order of clergy. But where the spirit was to come from of justice, of conciliation, of steady and firm resistance to corruption and selfishness, he gives us no light. What it comes to is, that with patience, temper, and public spirit, Ireland might be easily reformed and brought into order: but unless he hoped for patience, temper, and public spirit from Lord Essex, to whom he seems to allude as the person "on whom the eye of England is fixed, and our last hopes now rest," he too easily took for granted what was the real difficulty. His picture is exact and forcible of one side of the truth; it seems beyond the thought of an honest, well-informed, and noble-minded Englishman that there was another side.

But he was right in his estimate of the danger, and of the immediate evils which produced it. He was right in thinking that want of method, want of control, want of confidence, and an untimely parsimony, prevented severity from having a fair chance of preparing a platform for reform and conciliation. He was right in his conviction of the inveterate treachery of the Irish Chiefs, partly the result of ages of mismanagement, but now incurable. While he was writing, Tyrone, a craftier and bolder man than Desmond, was taking up what Desmond had failed in. He was playing a game with the English authorities which, as things then were, is almost beyond belief. He was outwitting or cajoling the veterans of Irish government, who knew perfectly well what he was, and yet let him amuse them with false expectations—men like Sir John Norreys, who broke his heart when he found out how Tyrone had baffled and made a fool of him. Wishing to gain time for help from Spain, and to extend the rebellion, he revolted, submitted, sued for pardon, but did not care to take it when granted, fearlesly presented himself before the English officers while he was still beleaguering their posts, led the English forces a chase through mountains and bogs, inflicted heavy losses on them, and yet managed to keep negotiations open as long as it suited him. From 1594 to 1598 the rebellion had been gaining ground; it had crept round from Ulster to Connaught, from Connaught to Leinster, and now from Connaught to the borders of Munster. But Munster, with its English landlords and settlers, was still, on the whole, quiet. At the end of 1597, the Council at Dublin reported home that "Munster was the best tempered of all the rest at this present time ; for that though not long since sundry loose persons" (among them the base sons of Lord Roche, Spenser's adversary in land suits) "became Robin Hoods and slew some of the undertakers, dwelling scattered in thatched houses and remote places, near to woods and fastnesses, yet now they are cut off, and no known disturbers left who are like to make any dangerous alteration on the sudden. But they go on to add that they "have intelligence that many are practised withal from the North, to be of combination with the rest, and stir coals in Munster, whereby the whole realm might be in a general uproar." And they repeat their opinion that they must be prepared for a "universal Irish war, intended to shake off all English government."

In April, 1598, Tyrone received a new pardon ; in the following August he surprised an English army near Armagh, and shattered it with a defeat the bloodiest and most complete ever received by the English in Ireland. Then the storm burst. Tyrone sent a force into Munster ; and once more Munster rose. It was a rising of the dispossessed proprietors and the whole native population against the English undertakers ; a "ragged number of rogues and boys," as the English Council describes them ; rebel kernes, pouring out of the "great wood," and from Arlo, the "chief fastness of the rebels." Even the chiefs, usually on good terms with the English, could not resist the stream. Even Thomas Norreys, the President, was surprised, and retired to Cork, bringing down on himself a severe reprimand from the English Government. "You might better have resisted than you did, considering the many defensible houses and castles possessed by the undertakers, who, for aught we can hear, were by no means comforted nor supported by you, but either from lack of comfort from you, or out of mere cowardice, fled away from the rebels on the first alarm." "Whereupon," says Cox, the Irish historian, "the Munsterians, generally, rebel in October, and kill, murder, ravish and spoil without mercy ; and Tyrone made James Fitz-Thomas Earl of Desmond, on condition to be tributary to him ; he was the handsomest man of his time, and is commonly called the *Sugan* Earl."

On the last day of the previous September (Sept. 30, 1598), the English Council had written to the Irish Government to appoint Edmund Spenser, Sheriff of the County of Cork, "a gentleman dwelling in the County of Cork, who is so well known unto you all for his good and commendable parts, being a man endowed with good knowledge in learning, and not unskilful or without experience in the wars." In October, Munster was in the hands of the insurgents, who were driving Norreys before them, and sweeping out of house and castle the panic-stricken English settlers. On December 9th, Norreys wrote home a despatch about the state of the province. This despatch was sent to England by Spenser, as we learn from a subsequent despatch of Norreys of December 21.* It was received at Whitehall, as appears from Robert Cecil's endorsement, on the 24th of December. The passage from Ireland seems to have been a long one. And this is the last original document which remains about Spenser.

What happened to him in the rebellion we learn generally from two sources, from Camden's *History*, and from Drummond of Hawthornden's Recollections of Ben Jonson's conversations with him in 1619. In the Munster insurrection of October, the new Earl of Desmond's followers did not forget that Kilcolman was an old possession of the Desmonds. It was sacked and burnt. Jonson related that a little new-born child of Spenser's perished in the flames. Spenser and his wife escaped, and he came over to England, a ruined and heart-broken man. He died Jan. 16, 159$\frac{8}{9}$; "he died," said Johnson, "for lack of bread, in King Street [Westminster], and refused twenty pieces sent to him by my Lord of Essex, saying that he had no time to spend them." He was buried in the Abbey, near the grave of Chaucer, and his funeral was at the charge of the Earl of Essex. Beyond this we know nothing; nothing about the details of his escape, nothing of the fate of his manuscripts, or the condition in which he left his work, nothing about the suffering he went through in England. All conjecture is idle waste of time. We only know that the first of English poets perished miserably and prematurely, one of the many heavy sacrifices which the evil fortune of Ireland has cost to England; one of many illustrious victims to the madness, the evil customs, the vengeance of an ill-treated and ill-governed people.

One Irish rebellion brought him to Ireland, another drove him out of it. Desmond's brought him to pass his life there, and to fill his mind with the images of what was then Irish life, with its scenery, its antipathies, its tempers, its chances, and necessities. Tyrone's swept him from Ireland, beggared and hopeless. Ten years after his death, a bookseller, reprinting the six books of the *Faerie Queene*, added two cantos and a fragment, *On Mutability*, supposed to be a part of the *Legend of Constancy*. Where and how he got them he has not told us. It is a strange and solemn meditation on the universal subjection of all things to the inexorable conditions of change. It is strange, with its odd episode and fable which Spenser cannot resist about his neighboring streams, its borrowings from Chaucer, and its quaint mixture of mythology with sacred and with Irish scenery, Olympus and Tabor, and his own rivers and mountains. But it is full of his power over thought and imagery; and it is quite in a different key from anything in the first six books. It has an undertone of awe-struck and pathetic sadness.

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* I am indebted for this reference to Mr. Hans Claude Hamilton. See also his Preface to Calendar of Irish Papers, 1574-85, p. lxxvi.

> "What man that sees the ever whirling wheel
> Of Change, the which all mortal things doth sway,
> But that thereby doth find and plainly feel
> How Mutability in them doth play
> Her cruel sports to many men's decay."

He imagines a mighty Titaness, sister of Hecate and Bellona, most beautiful and most terrible, who challenges universal dominion over all things in earth and heaven, sun and moon, planets and stars, times and seasons, life and death; and finally over the wills and thoughts and natures of the gods, even of Jove himself; and who pleads her cause before the awful Mother of all things, figured as Chaucer had already imagined her:

> "Great Nature, ever young, yet full of eld;
> Still moving, yet unmoved from her stead;
> Unseen of any, yet of all beheld,
> Thus sitting on her throne."

He imagines all the powers of the upper and nether worlds assembled before her on his own familiar hills, instead of Olympus, where she shone like the Vision which "dazed" those "three sacred saints" on "Mount Thabor." Before her pass all things known of men, in rich and picturesque procession; the Seasons pass, and the Months, and the Hours, and Day and Night, Life, as "a fair young lusty boy," Death, grim and grisly—

> "Yet is he nought but parting of the breath,
> Ne ought to see, but like a shade to weene,
> Unbodied, unsoul'd, unheard, unseene—"

and on all of them the claims of the Titaness, Mutability, are acknowledged. Nothing escapes her sway in this present state, except Nature, which, while seeming to change, never really changes her ultimate constituent elements, or her universal laws. But when she seemed to have extorted the admission of her powers, Nature silences her. Change is apparent, and not real; and the time is coming when all change shall end in the final changeless change.

> "'I well consider all that ye have said,
> And find that all things stedfastnesse do hate
> And changed be; yet, being rightly wayd,
> They are not changed from their first estate;
> But by their change their being do dilate,
> And turning to themselves at length againe,
> Do worke their owne perfection so by fate:
> Then over them Change doth not rule and raigne,
> But they raigne over Change, and do their states maintaine.

"'Cease therefore, daughter, further to aspire,
And thee content thus to be rul'd by mee,
For thy decay thou seekst by thy desire;
But time shall come that all shall changed bee,
And from thenceforth none no more change shal see.'
So was the Titanesse put downe and whist,
And Jove confirm'd in his imperiall see.
Then was that whole assembly quite dismist,
And Natur's selfe did vanish, whither no man wist."

What he meant—how far he was thinking of those daring arguments of religious and philosophical change of which the world was beginning to be full, we cannot now tell. The allegory was not finished: at least it is lost to us. We have but a fragment more, the last fragment of his poetry. It expresses the great commonplace which so impressed itself on the men of that time, and of which his works are full. No words could be more appropriate to be the last words of one who was so soon to be in his own person such an instance of their truth. They are fit closing words to mark his tragic and pathetic disappearance from the high and animated scene in which his imagination worked. And they record, too, the yearning hope of rest not extinguished by terrible and fatal disaster:

"When I bethinke me on that speech whyleare
Of Mutabilitie, and well it way,
Me seemes, that though she all unworthy were
Of the Heav'ns Rule; yet, very sooth to say,
In all things else she beares the greatest sway:
Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle,
And love of things so vaine to cast away;
Whose flowring pride, so fading and so fickle,
Short Time shall soon cut down with his consuming sickle.

"Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
Of that same time when no more Change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things, firmely stayd
Upon the pillours of Eternity,
That is contrayr to Mutabilitie;
For all that moveth doth in Change delight:
But thenceforth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabaoth hight:
O! that great Sabaoth God, grant me that Sabaoths sight."

MILTON.

BY

MARK PATTISON, B.D.,

RECTOR OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

MILTON.

FIRST PERIOD. 1608—1639.

CHAPTER I.

FAMILY—SCHOOL—COLLEGE.

In the seventeenth century it was not the custom to publish two volumes upon every man or woman whose name had appeared on a title-page. Nor, where lives of authors were written, were they written with the redudancy of particulars which is now allowed. Especially are the lives of the poets and dramatists obscure and meagrely recorded. Of Milton, however, we know more personal details than of any man of letters of that age. Edward Phillips, the poet's nephew, who was brought up by his uncle, and lived in habits of intercourse with him to the last, wrote a life, brief, inexact, superficial, but valuable from the nearness of the writer to the subject of his memoir. A contemporary of Milton, John Aubrey (b. 1625), "a very honest man, and accurate in his accounts of matters of fact," as Toland says of him, made it his business to learn all he could about Milton's habits. Aubrey was himself acquainted with Milton, and diligently catechised the poet's widow, his brother, and his nephew, scrupulously writing down each detail as it came to him, in the minutes of lives which he supplied to Antony Wood to be worked up in his *Athenæ* and *Fasti*. Aubrey was only an antiquarian collector, and was mainly dependent on what could be learned from the family. None of Milton's family, and least of all Edward Phillips, were of a capacity to apprehend moral or mental qualities, and they could only tell Aubrey of his goings out and his comings in, of the clothes he wore, the dates of events, the names of his acquaintance. In compensation for the want of observation on the part of his own kith and kin, Milton himself, with a superb and ingenuous egotism, has revealed the secret of his thoughts and feelings in numerous autobiographical passages of his prose writings. From what he directly communicates, and from what he unconsciously betrays, we obtain an internal life of the mind, more ample than that external life of the bodily machine, which we owe to Aubrey and Phillips.

In our own generation all that printed books or written documents have preserved about Milton has been laboriously brought together by Professor David Masson, in whose *Life of Milton* we have the most exhaustive biography that ever was compiled of any Englishman. It is a noble and final monument erected to the poet's memory two centuries after his death. My excuse for attempting to write of Milton after Mr. Masson is that his life is in six volumes octavo, with a total of some four to five thousand pages. The present outline is written for a different class of readers, those, namely, who cannot afford to know more of Milton than can be told in some two hundred and fifty pages.

A family of Miltons, deriving the name in all probability from the parish of Great Milton near Thame, is found in various branches spread over Oxfordshire and the adjoining counties in the reign of Elizabeth. The poet's grandfather was a substantial yeoman, living at Stanton St. John, about five miles from Oxford, within the forest of Shotover, of which he was also an under-ranger. The ranger's son John was at school in Oxford, possibly as a chorister, conformed to the Established Church, and was in consequence cast off by his father, who adhered to the old faith. The disinherited son went up to London, and by the assistance of a friend was set up in business as a scrivener. A scrivener discharged some of the functions which, at the present day, are undertaken for us in a solicitor's office. John Milton the father, being a man of probity and force of character, was soon on the way to acquire "a plentiful fortune." But he continued to live over his shop, which was in Bread Street, Cheapside, and which bore the sign of the Spread Eagle, the family crest.

It was at the Spread Eagle that his eldest son, John Milton, was born, 9th December, 1608, being thus exactly contemporary with Lord Clarendon, who also died in the same year as the poet. Milton must be added to the long roll of our poets who have been natives of the city which now never sees sunlight or blue sky, along with Chaucer, Spenser, Herrick, Cowley, Shirley, Ben Jonson, Pope, Gray, Keats. Besides attending as a day-scholar at St. Paul's School, which was close at hand, his father engaged for him a private tutor at home. The household of the Spread Eagle not only enjoyed civic prosperity, but some share of that liberal cultivation which, if not imbibed in the home, neither school nor college ever confers. The scrivener was not only an amateur in music, but a composer, whose tunes, songs, and airs found their way into the best collections of music. Both schoolmaster and tutor were men of mark. The high master of St. Paul's at that time was Alexander Gill, an M.A. of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, who was "esteemed to have such an excellent way of training up youth, that none in his time went beyond it." The private tutor was Thomas Young, who was, or had been, curate to Mr.

Gataker, of Rotherhithe, itself a certificate of merit, even if we had not the pupil's emphatic testimony of gratitude. Milton's fourth elegy is addressed to Young, when, in 1627, he was settled at Hamburg, crediting him with having first infused into his pupil a taste for classic literature and poetry. Biographers have derived Milton s Presbyterianism in 1641 from the lessons twenty years before of this Thomas Young, a Scotchman, and one of the authors of the *Smectymnuus*. This, however, is a misreading of Milton's mind—a mind which was an organic whole—"whose seed was in itself," self-determined; not one whose opinions can be accounted for by contagion or casual impact.

Of Milton's boyish exercises two have been preserved. They are English paraphrases of two of the Davidic Psalms, and were done at the age of fifteen. That they were thought by himself worth printing in the same volume with *Comus*, is the most noteworthy thing about them. No words are so commonplace but that they can be made to yield inference by a biographer. And even in these school exercises we think we can discern that the future poet was already a diligent reader of Sylvester's *Du Bartas* (1605), the patriarch of Protestant poetry, and of Fairfax's *Tasso* (1600). There are other indications that, from very early years, poetry had assumed a place in Milton's mind, not merely as a juvenile pastime, but as an occupation of serious import.

Young Gill, son of the high master, a school-fellow of Milton, went up to Trinity, Oxford, where he got into trouble by being informed against by Chillingworth, who reported incautious Presbyterian speeches of Gill to his godfather, Laud. With Gill, Milton corresponded; they exchanged their verses, Greek, Latin, and English, with a confession on Milton's part that he prefers English and Latin composition to Greek; that to write Greek verses in this age was to sing to the deaf. Gill, Milton finds "a severe critic of poetry, however disposed to be lenient to his friend's attempts."

If Milton's genius did not announce itself in his paraphrases of Psalms, it did in his impetuosity in learning, "which I seized with such eagerness that from the twelfth year of my age I scarce ever went to bed before midnight." Such is his own account. And it is worth notice that we have here an incidental test of the trustworthiness of Aubrey's reminiscences. Aubrey's words are, "When he was very young he studied very hard, and sate up very late, commonly till twelve or one o'clock at night; and his father ordered the maid to sit up for him."

He was ready for college at sixteen, not earlier than the usual age at that period. As his schoolmasters, both the Gills, were Oxford men (Young was of St. Andrew's), it might have been expected that the young scholar would have been placed at Oxford. However, it was determined that he should go to Cambridge, where he was admitted a pensioner of Christ's, 12th February, 1625, and commenced residence in the Easter term ensuing. Perhaps his father feared the growing High Church, or, as it was then called, Arminianism, of his own university. It so happened, however, that the tutor to whom the young Milton was consigned was specially noted for Arminian proclivities. This was William Chappell, then Fellow of Christ's, who so recommended himself to Laud by his party zeal that he was advanced to be Provost of Dublin and Bishop of Cork.

Milton was one of those pupils who are more likely to react against a tutor than to take a ply from him. A preaching divine—Chappell composed a treatise on the art of preaching—a narrow ecclesiastic of the type loved by Laud, was exactly the man who would drive Milton into opposition. But the tutor of the seventeenth century was not able, like the easy-going tutor of the eighteenth, to leave the young rebel to pursue the reading of his choice in his own chamber. Chappell endeavored to drive his pupil along the scholastic highway of exercises. Milton, returning to Cambridge after his summer vacation, eager for the acquisition of wisdom, complains that he "was dragged from his studies, and compelled to employ himself in composing some frivolous declamation!" Indocile, as he confesses himself (indocilisque ætas prava magistra fuit), he kicked against either the discipline or the exercises exacted by college rules. He was punished. Aubrey had heard that he was flogged, a thing not impossible in itself, as the *Admonition Book* of Emanuel gives an instance of corporal chastisement as late as 1667. Aubrey's statement, however, is a dubitative interlineation in his MS., and Milton's age, seventeen, as well as the silence of his later detractors, who raked up everything which could be told to his disadvantage, concur to make us hesitate to accept a fact on so slender evidence. Anyhow, Milton was sent away from college for a time, in the year 1627, in consequence of something unpleasant which had occurred. That it was something of which he was not ashamed is clear, from his alluding to it himself in the lines written at the time,—

> "Nec duras usque libet minas perferre magistri
> Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo."

And that the tutor was not considered to have been wholly free trom blame is evident from the fact that the master transferred Milton from Chappell to another tutor, a very unusual proceeding. Whatever the nature of the punishment, it was not what is known as a rustication; for Milton did not lose a term, taking his two degrees of B.A. and M.A. in regular course, at the earliest date from his matriculation permitted by the statutes. The one outbreak of juvenile petulance and indiscipline over, Milton's force of character and unusual attainments acquired him the esteem of his seniors. The nickname of "the lady of Christ's," given him in derision by his fellow-students, is an attestation of virtuous conduct. Ten years later, in 1642, Milton takes an opportunity to "acknowledge publicly, with all grateful mind, that more than ordinary respect which I found, above many of my equals, at the hands of those courteous and learned men, the Fellows of that college wherein I spent some years; who, at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many ways how much better it would content them that I would stay; as by many letters full of kindness and loving respect, both before that time and long after, I was assured of their singular good affection towards me."

The words "how much better it would content them that I would stay" have been thought to hint at the offer of a fellowship at Christ's. It is highly improbable that such an offer was ever made. There had been two vacancies in the roll of fellows since Milton had become eligible by taking his B.A. degree, and he had been passed over in favor of juniors, who were pushed by Court patrons or college favoritism. And in universities generally, it is not literature or general acquirements which recommend a candidate for endowed posts, but technical skill in the prescribed exercises, and a pedagogic intention.

Further than this, had a fellowship in his college been attainable, it would not have had much attraction for Milton. A fellowship implied two things, residence in college, with teaching, and orders in the church. With neither of these two conditions was Milton prepared to comply. In 1632, when he proceeded to his M.A. degree, Milton was twenty-four. He had been seven years in college, and had therefore sufficient experience what college life was like. He who was so impatient of the "turba legentum prava" in the Bodleian library, could not have patiently consorted with the vulgar-minded and illiterate ecclesiastics who peopled the colleges of that day. Even Mede, though the author of *Clavis Apocalyptica* was steeped in the soulless clericalism of his age, could not support his brother fellows without frequent retirements to Balsham, "being not willing to be joined with such company." To be dependent upon Bainbrigge's (the Master of Christ's) good pleasure for a supply of pupils; to have to live in daily intercourse with the Powers and the Chappells, such as we know them from Mede's letters, was an existence to which only the want of daily bread could have driven Milton. Happily his father's circumstances were not such as to make a fellowship pecuniarily an object to the son. If he longed for "the studious cloister's pale," he had been now for seven years near enough to college life to have dispelled the dream that it was a life of lettered leisure and philosophic retirement. It was just about Milton's time that the college tutor finally supplanted the university professor, a system which implied the substitution of exercises performed by the pupil for instruction given by the teacher. Whatever advantages this system brought with it, it brought inevitably the degradation of the teacher, who was thus dispensed from knowledge, having only to attend to form. The time of the college tutor was engrossed by the details of scholastic superintendence, and the frivolous worry of academical business. Admissions, matriculations, disputations, declamations, the formalities of degrees, public reception of royal and noble visitors, filled every hour of his day, and left no time, even if he had had the taste, for private study. To teaching, as we shall see, Milton was far from averse. But then it must be teaching as he understood it, a teaching which should expand the intellect and raise the character, not dexterity in playing with the verbal formulæ of the disputations of the schools.

Such an occupation could have no attractions for one who was even now meditating *Il Penseroso* (composed 1633). At twenty he had already confided to his school-fellow, the younger Gill, the secret of his discontent with the Cambridge tone. "Here among us," he writes from college, "are barely one or two who do not flutter off, all unfledged, into theology, having gotten of philology or of philosophy scarce so much as a smattering. And for theology they are content with just what is enough to enable them to patch up a paltry sermon." He retained the same feeling towards his Alma Mater in 1641, when he wrote (Reason of Church Government), "Cambridge, which as in the time of her better health, and mine own younger judgment, I never greatly admired, so now much less . . . ."

On a review of all these indications of feeling, I should conclude that Milton never had serious thoughts of a college fellowship, and that his antipathy arose from a sense of his own incompatibility of temper with academic life, and was not, like Phineas Fletcher's, the result of disappointed hopes, and a sense of injury for having been refused a fellowship at King's. One consideration which remains to be mentioned would alone be decisive in favor of this view. A fellowship required orders. Milton had been intended for the church, and had been sent to college with that view. By the time he left Cambridge, at twenty-four, it had become clear both to himself and his family that he could never submit his understanding to the trammels of church formularies. His later mind, about 1641, is expressed by himself in his own forcible style,—"The church, to whose service by the intention of my parents and friends I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions, till coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded in the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, ... I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing." When he took leave of the university, in 1632, he had perhaps not developed this distinct antipathy to the establishment. For in a letter, preserved in Trinity College, and written in the winter of 1631–32, he does not put forward any conscientious objections to the clerical profession, but only apologizes to the friend to whom the letter is addressed for delay in making choice of some profession. The delay itself sprung from an unconscious distaste. In a mind of the consistent texture of Milton's, motives are secretly influential before they emerge in consciousness. We shall not be wrong in asserting that when he left Cambridge in 1632, it was already impossible, in the nature of things, that he should have taken orders in the Church of England, or a fellowship of which orders were a condition.

CHAPTER II.

RESIDENCE AT HORTON—L'ALLEGRO—IL PENSEROSO—ARCADES—COMUS—LYCIDAS.

MILTON had been sent to college to qualify for a profession. The church, the first intended, he had gradually discovered to be incompatible. Of the law, either his father's branch, or some other, he seems to have entertained a thought, but to have speedily dismissed it. So at the age of twenty-four he returns to his father's house, bringing nothing with him but his education and a silent purpose. The elder Milton had now retired from business, with sufficient means, but not with wealth. Though John was the eldest son, there were two other children, a brother, Christopher, and a sister, Anne. To have no profession, even a nominal one, to be above trade and below the status of squire or yeoman, and to come home with the avowed object of leading an idle life, was conduct which required justification. Milton felt it to be so. In a letter addressed, in 1632, to some senior friend at Cambridge, name unknown, he thanks him for being "a good watchman to admonish that the hours of the night pass on, for so I call my life, as yet obscure and unserviceable to mankind, and that the day with me is at hand, wherein Christ commands all to labor." Milton has no misgivings. He knows that what he is doing with himself is the best he can do. His aim is far above bread-winning, and therefore his probation must be long. He destines for himself no indolent tarrying in the garden of Armida. His is a "mind made and set wholly on the accomplishment of greatest things." He knows that the looker-on will hardly accept his apology for "being late," that it is in order to being "more fit." Yet it is the only apology he can offer. And he is dissatisfied with his own progress. "I am something suspicious of myself, and do take notice of a certain belatedness in me."

Of this frame of mind the record is the second sonnet, lines which are an inseparable part of Milton's biography—

"How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
    Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
    My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.

> Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
> That I to manhood am arrived so near,
> And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
> That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
> Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
> It shall be still in strictest measure even
> To that same lot, however mean or high,
> Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
> All is, if I have grace to use it so,
> As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye."

With aspirations thus vast, though unformed, with "amplitude of mind to greatest deeds," Milton retired to his father's house in the country. Five more years of self-education, added to the seven years of academical residence, were not too much for the meditation of projects such as Milton was already conceiving. Years many more that twelve, filled with great events and distracting interests, were to pass over before the body and shape of *Paradise Lost* was given to these imaginings.

The country retirement in which the elder Milton had fixed himself was the little village of Horton, situated in that southernmost angle of the county of Buckingham which insinuates itself between Berks and Middlesex. Though only about seventeen miles from London, it was the London of Charles I., with its population of some 300,000 only; before coaches and macadamized roads; while the Colne, which flows through the village, was still a river, and not the kennel of a paper-mill. There was no lack of water and wood, meadow and pasture, closes and open field, with the regal towers of Windsor, "bosom'd high in tufted trees," to crown the landscape. Unbroken leisure, solitude, tranquillity of mind, surrounded by the thickets and woods which Pliny thought indispensable to poetical meditation (Epist. 9. 10), no poet's career was ever commenced under more favorable auspices. The youth of Milton stands in strong contrast with the misery, turmoil, chance medley, struggle with poverty, or abandonment to dissipation, which blighted the early years of so many of our men of letters. Milton's life is a drama in three acts. The first discovers him in the calm and peaceful retirement of Horton, of which *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Lycidas* are the expression. In the second act he is breathing the foul and heated atmosphere of party passion and religious hate, generating the lurid fires which glare in the battailous canticles of his prose pamphlets. The three great poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, are the utterance of his final period of solitary and Promethean grandeur, when, blind, destitute, friendless, he testified of righteousness, temperance, and jndgment to come, alone before a fallen world.

In this delicious retirement of Horton, in alternate communing with nature and with books, for five years of persevering study he laid in a stock, not of learning, but of what is far above learning, of wide and accurate knowledge. Of the man whose profession is learning, it is characteristic that knowledge is its own end, and research its own reward. To Milton all knowledge, all life, virtue itself, was already only a means to a further end. He will know only "that which is of use to know," and by useful he meant that which conduced to form him for his vocation of poet.

From a very early period Milton had taken poetry to be his vocation, in the most solemn and earnest mood. The idea of this devotion was the shaping idea of his life. It was, indeed, a bent of nature, with roots drawing from deeper strata of character than any act of reasoned will, which kept him out of the professions, and now fixed him, a seeming idler, but really hard at work, in his father's house at Horton. The intimation which he had given of his purpsse in the sonnet above quoted had become, in 1641, "an inward prompting which grows daily upon, that by labor and intent study, which I take to be my portion in this life, joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times, as they should not willingly let it die."

What the ultimate form of his poetic utterance shall be, he is in no hurry to decide. He will be "long choosing," and quite content to be "beginning late." All his care at present is to qualify himself for the lofty function to which he aspires. No lawyer, physician, statesman, ever labored to fit himself for his profession harder than Milton strove to qualify himself for his vocation of poet. Verse-making is, to the wits, a game of ingenuity; to Milton, it is a prophetic office, towards which the will of Heaven leads him. The creation he contemplates will not flow from him as the stanzas of the *Gerusalemme* did from Tasso at twenty-one. Before he can make a poem, Milton will make himself. "I was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrated of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem . . . . not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy."

Of the spontaneity, the abandon, which are supposed to be characteristic of the poetical nature, there is nothing here; all is moral purpose, precision, self-dedication. So he acquires all knowledge, not for knowledge' sake, from the instinct of learning, the necessity for completeness, but because he is to be a poet. Nor will he only have knowledge, he will have wisdom; moral development shall go hand in hand with intellectual. A poet's soul should "contain of good, wise, just, the perfect shape." He will cherish continually a pure mind in a pure body. "I argued to myself that, if unchastity in a woman, whom St. Paul terms the glory of man, be such a scandal and dishonor, then certainly in a man, who is both the image and glory of God, it must, though commonly not so thought, be much more deflouring and dishonorable." There is yet a third constituent of the poetical nature; to knowledge and to virtue must be added religion. For it is from God that the poet's thoughts come. "This is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the life of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous acts and affairs; till which in some measure be compast, I refuse not to sustain this expectation." Before the piety of this vow, Dr. Johnson's morosity yields for a moment, and he is forced to exclaim, "From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the *Paradise Lost.*"

Of these years of self-cultivation, of conscious moral architecture, such as Plato enacted in his ideal State, but none but Milton ever had the courage to practise, the biographer would gladly give a minute account. But the means of doing so are wanting. The poet kept no diary of his reading, such as some great students, *e.g.* Isaac Casaubon, have left. Nor could such a record, had it been attempted, have shown us the secret process by which the scholar's dead learning was transmuted in Milton's mind into living imagery. "Many studious and contemplative years, altogether spent in the search of religious and civil knowledge," is his own description of the period. "You make many inquiries as to what I am about," he writes to Diodati—"what am I thinking of? Why, with God's help, of immortality! Forgive the word, I only whisper it in your ear! Yes, I am pluming my wings for a flight." This was in 1637, at the end of five years of the Horton probation. The poems, which, rightly read, are strewn with autobiographical hints, are not silent as to the intention of this period. In *Paradise Regained* (i: 196), Milton reveals himself. And in *Comus*, written at Horton, the lines 375 and following are charged with the same sentiment,—

> "And wisdom's self
> Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
> Where, with her best nurse, contemplation,
> She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
> That in the various bustle of resort
> Were all-to ruffled and sometimes impair'd."

That at Horton Milton "read all the Greek and Latin writers" is one of Johnson's careless versions of Milton's own words, "enjoyed a complete holiday in turning over Latin and Greek authors." Milton read, not as a professional theologian, but as a poet and scholar, and always in the light of his secret purpose. It was not in his way to sit down to read over all the Greek and Latin writers, as Casaubon or Salmasius might do. Milton read with selection, and "meditated," says Aubrey, what he read. His practice conformed to the principle he has himself laid down in the often-quoted lines (*Paradise Regained*, iv. 322)—

> "Who reads
> Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
> A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
> Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
> Deep vers'd in books, and shallow in himself."

Some of Milton's Greek books have been traced; his *Aratus*, *Lycophron*, *Euripides* (the Stephanus of 1602), and his *Pindar* (the Benedictus of 1620), are still extant, with marginal memoranda, which should seem to evince careful and discerning reading. One critic even thought it worth while to accuse Joshua Barnes of silently appropriating conjectural emendations from Milton's *Euripides*. But Milton's own poems are the best evidence of his familiarity with all that is most choice in the remains of classic poetry. Though the commentators are often seeing an imitation where there is none, no commentary can point out the ever-present infusion of classical flavor, which bespeaks intimate converse far more than direct adaptation. Milton's classical allusions, says Hartley Coleridge, are amalgamated and consubstantiated with his native thought.

A commonplace book of Milton's, after having lurked unsuspected for 200 years in the archives of Netherby, has been disinterred in our own day (1874). It appears to belong partly to the end of the Horton period. It is not by any means an account of all that he is reading, but only an arrangement under certain heads or places of memoranda for future use. These notes are extracted from about eighty different authors, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and English. Of Greek authors no less than sixteen are quoted. The notes are mostly notes of historical facts, seldom of thoughts, never of mere verbal expression. There is no trace in it of any intention to store up either the imagery or the language of poetry. It may be that such notes were made and entered in another volume; for the book thus accidentally preserved to us seems to refer to other similar volumes of collections. But it is more likely that no such poetical memoranda were ever made, and that Milton trusted entirely to memory for the wealth of classical allusion with which his verse is surcharged. He did not extract from the poets and the great writers whom he was daily turning over, but only from the inferior authors and secondary historians, which he read only once. Most of the material collected in the commonplace book is used in his prose pamphlets. But the facts are worked into the texture of his argument, rather than cited as extraneous witnesses.

In reading history it was his aim to get at a conspectus of the general current of affairs rather than to study minutely a special period. He tells Diodati in September, 1637, that he has studied Greek history continuously from the beginning to the fall of Constantinople. When he tells the same friend that he has been long involved in the obscurity of the early middle ages of Italian history down to the time of the Emperor Rudolf, we learn from the commonplace book that he had only been reading the one volume of Sigonius's *Historia Regni Italici.* From the thirteenth century downwards he proposes to himself to study each Italian state in some separate history. Even before his journey to Italy he read Italian with as much ease as French. He tells us that it was by his father's advice that he had acquired these modern languages. But we can see that they were essential parts of his own scheme of self-education, which included, in another direction, Hebrew, both Biblical and Rabbinical, and even Syriac.

The intensity of his nature showed itself in his method of study. He read, not desultorily, a bit here and another there, but "when I take up a thing, I never pause or break it off, nor am drawn away from it by any other interest, till I have arrived at the goal I proposed to myself." He made breaks occasionally in this routine of study by visits to London, to see friends, to buy books, to take lessons in mathematics, to go to the theatre, or to concerts. A love of music was inherited from his father.

I have called this peried, 1632–39, one of preparation, and not of production. But though the first volume of poems printed by Milton did not appear till 1645, the most considerable part of its contents was written during the period included in the present chapter.

The fame of the author of *Paradise Lost* has overshadowed that of the author of *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Lycidas.* Yet had *Paradise Lost* never been written, these three poems, with *Comus*, would have sufficed to place their author in a class apart, and above all those who had used the English language for poetical purposes before him. It is incumbent on Milton's biographer to relate the circumstances of the composition of *Comus*, as it is an incident in the life of the poet.

Milton's musical tastes had brought him the acquaintance of Henry Lawes, at that time the most celebrated composer in England. When the Earl of Bridgewater would give an entertainment at Ludlow Castle to celebrate his entry upon his office as President of Wales and the Marches, it was to Lawes that application was made to furnish the music. Lawes, as naturally, applied to his young poetical acquaintance Milton to write the words. The entertainment was to be of that sort which was fashionable at court, and was called a Mask. In that brilliant period of court life which was inaugurated by Elizabeth and put an end to by the Civil War, a Mask was a frequent and favorite amusement. It was an exhibition in which pageantry and music predominated, but in which dialogue was introduced as accompaniment or explanation.

The dramatic Mask of the sixteenth century has been traced by the antiquaries as far back as the time of Edward III. But in its perfected shape it was a genuine offspring of the English Renaissance, a cross between the vernacular mummery, or mystery-play, and the Greek drama. No great court festival was considered complete without such a public show. Many of our great dramatic writers, Beaumont, Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Middleton, Dekker, Shirley, Carew, were constrained by the fashion of the time to apply their invention to gratify this taste for decorative representation. No less an artist than Inigo Jones must occasionally stoop to construct the machinery.

The taste for grotesque pageant in the open air must have gradually died out before the general advance of refinement. The Mask by a process of evolution would have become the Opera. But it often happens that when a taste or fashion is at the point of death, it undergoes a forced and temporary revival. So it was with the Mask. In 1633, the Puritan hatred to the theatre had blazed out in Prynne's *Histriomastix*, and, as a natural consequence, the loyal and cavalier portion of society threw themselves into dramatic amusements of every kind. It was an unreal revival of the Mask, stimulated by political passion, in the wane of genuine taste for the fantastic and semi-barbarous pageant, in which the former age had delighted. What the imagination of the spectators was no longer equal to, was to be supplied by costliness of dress and scenery. These last representations of the expiring Mask were the occasions of an extravagant outlay. The Inns of Court and Whitehall vied with each other in the splendor and solemnity with which they brought out—the Lawyers, Shirley's *Triumph of Peace*—the Court, Carew's *Cœlum Britannicum*.

It was a strange caprice of fortune that made the future poet of the Puritan epic the last composer of a cavalier mask. The slight plot, or story, of *Comus* was probably suggested to Milton by his recollection of George Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*, which he may have seen on the stage. The personage of *Comus* was borrowed from a Latin extravaganza by a Dutch professor, whose *Comus* was reprinted at Oxford in 1634, the very year in which Milton wrote his *Mask*. The so-called tradition collected by Oldys, of the young Egertons, who acted in *Comus*, having lost themselves in Haywood Forest on their way to Ludlow, obviously grew out of Milton's poem. However casual the suggestion, or unpromising the occasion, Milton worked out of it a strain of poetry such as had never been heard in England before. If any reader wishes to realize the immense step upon what had gone before him, which was now made by a young man of twenty-seven, he should turn over some of the most celebrated of the masks of the Jacobean period.

We have no information how *Comus* was received when represented at Ludlow, but it found a public of readers. For Lawes, who had the MS. in his hands, was so importuned for copies that, in 1637, he caused an edition to be printed off. Not surreptitiously; for though Lawes does not say, in the dedication to Lord Brackley, that he had the author's leave to print, we are sure that he had it, only from the motto. On the title page of this edition (1637) is a quotation from Virgil,—

> "Eheu! quid volui misero mihi! floribus austrum
> Perditus."

The words are Virgil's, but the appropriation of them, and their application in this "second intention," is too exquisite to have been made by any but Milton.

To the poems of the Horton period belong also the two pieces *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and *Lycidas.* He was probably in the early stage of acquiring the language, when he superscribed the two first poems with their Italian titles. For there is no such word as "Penseroso," the adjective formed from "Pensiero" being "pensieroso." Even had the word been written correctly, its signification is not that which Milton intended, viz., thoughtful, or contemplative, but anxious, full of cares, carking. The rapid purification of Milton's taste will be best perceived by comparing *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* of uncertain date, but written after 1632, wtih the *Ode on the Nativity*, written 1629. The Ode, notwithstanding its foretaste of Milton's grandeur, abounds in frigid conceits, from which the two later pieces are free. The Ode is frosty, as written in winter, within the four walls of a college chamber. The two idylls breathe the free air of spring and summer, and of the fields round Horton. They are thoroughly naturalistic; the choicest expression our language has yet found of the fresh charm of country life, not as that life is lived by the peasant, but as it is felt by a young and lettered student, issuing at early dawn, or at sunset, into the fields from his chamber and his books. All rural sights and sounds and smells are here blended in that ineffable combination which once or twice perhaps in our lives has saluted our young senses before their perceptions were blunted by alcohol, by lust, or ambition, or diluted by the social distractions of great cities.

The fidelity to nature of the imagery of these poems has been impugned by the critics.

> "Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
> And at my window bid good-morrow."

The skylark never approaches human habitations in this way, as the redbreast does. Mr. Masson replies that the subject of the verb "to come" is, not the skylark, but L'Allegro, the joyous student. I cannot construe the lines as Mr. Masson does, even though the consequence were to convict Milton, a city-bred youth, of not knowing a skylark from a sparrow when he saw it. A close observer of things around us would not speak of the eglantine as twisted, of the cowslip as wan, of the violet as glowing, or of the reed as balmy Lycidas' laureate hearse is to be strewn at once with primrose and woodbine, daffodil and jasmine. The pine is not "rooted deep as high" (*P. R.* 4416), but sends its roots along the surface. The elm, one of the thinnest-foliaged trees of the forest, is inappropriately named starproof *Arc.* 89). Lightning does not singe the top of trees (*P. L.* i. 613), but either shivers them, or cuts a groove down the stem to the ground. These and other such like inaccuracies must be set down partly to conventional language used without meaning, the vice of Latin versification enforced as a task, but they are partly due to real defect of natural knowledge.

Other objeccions of the critics on the same score, which may be met with, are easily dismissed. The objector, who can discover no reason why the oak should be styled "monumental," meets with his match in the defender who suggests that it may be rightly so called because monuments in churches are made of oak. I should tremble to have to offer an explanation to critics of Milton so acute as these two. But of less ingenious readers I would ask if any single word can be found equal to "monumental" in its power of suggesting to the imagination the historic oak of park or chase, up to the knees in fern, which has outlasted ten generations of men, has been the mute witness of the scenes of love, treachery or violence enacted in the baronial hall which it shadows and protects, and has been so associated with man that it is now rather a column and memorial oblelisk than a tree of the forest?

These are the humors of criticism. But apart from these, a naturalist is at once aware that Milton had neither the eye nor the ear of a naturalist. At no time, even before his loss of sight, was he an exact observer of natural objects. It may be that he knew a skylark from a redbreast, and did not confound the dog-rose with the honeysuckle. But I am sure that he had never acquired that interest in nature's things and ways which leads to close and loving watching of them. He had not that sense of outdoor nature, empirical and not scientific, which endows the *Angler* of his contemporary Walton with his enduring charm, and which is to be acquired only by living in the open country in childhood. Milton is not a man of the fields, but of books. His life is in his study, and when he steps abroad into the air he carries his study thoughts with him. He does not look at nature, but he sees her through books. Natural impressions are received from without, but always in those forms of beautiful speech in which the poets of all ages have clothed them. His epithets are not, like the epithets of the school of Dryden and Pope, culled from the *Gradus ad Parnassum*; they are expressive of some reality, but it is of a real emotion in the spectator's soul, not of any quality detected by keen insight in the objects themselves. This emotion Milton's art stamps with an epithet which shall convey the added charm of classical reminiscence. When, *e.g.*, he speaks of "the wand'ring moon," the original significance of the epithet comes home to the scholarly reader with the enhanced effect of its association with the "errantem lunam" of Horace. Nor because it is adopted from Horace has the epithet here the second-hand effect of a copy. If Milton sees nature through books, he still sees it.

> "To behold the wand'ring moon,
> Riding near her highest noon,
> Like one that had been led astray,
> Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
> And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
> Stooping through a fleecy cloud."

No allegation that "wand'ring moon" is borrowed from Horace can hide from us that Milton, though he remembered Horace, had watched the phenomenon with a feeling so intense that he projected his own soul's throb into the object before him, and named it with what Thomson calls "recollected love."

Milton's attitude towards nature is not that of a scientific naturalist, nor even that of a close observer. It is that of a poet who feels its total influence too powerfully to dissect it. If, as I have said, Milton reads books first and nature afterwards, it is not to test nature by his books, but to learn from both. He is learning not books, but from books. All he reads, sees, hears, is to him but nutriment for the soul. He is making himself. Man is to him the highest object; nature is subordinate to man, not only in its more vulgar uses, but as an excitant of fine emotion. He is not concerned to register the facts and phenomena of nature, but to convey the impressions they make on a sensitive soul. The external forms of things are to be presented to us as transformed through the heart and mind of the poet. The moon is endowed with life and will, "stooping," "riding," "wand'ring," "bowing her head," not as a frigid personification, and because the ancient poet so personified her, but by communication to her of the intense agitation which the nocturnal spectacle rouses in the poet's own breast.

I have sometimes read that these two idylls are "masterpieces of description." Other critics will ask if in the scenery of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* Milton has described the country about Horton, in Bucks, or that about Forest Hill, in Oxfordshire; and will object that the Chiltern Hills are not high enough for clouds to rest upon their top, much less upon their breast. But he has left out the pollard willows, says another censor, and the lines of pollard willow are the prominent feature in the valley of the Colne, even more so than the "hedgerow elms." Does the line "Walk the studious cloisters pale" *mean* St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey? When these things can continue to be asked, it is hardly superfluous to continue to repeat that truth of fact and poetical truth are two different things. Milton's attitude towards nature is not that of a "descriptive poet," if indeed the phrase be not a self-contradiction.

In Milton nature is not put forward as the poet's theme. His theme is man, in the two contrasted moods of joyous emotion or grave reflection. The shifting scenery ministers to the varying mood. Thomson, in the *Seasons* (1726), sets himself to render natural phenomena as they truly are. He has left us a vivid presentation in gorgeous language of the naturalistic calendar of the changing year. Milton, in these two idylls, has recorded a day of twenty-four hours. But he has not registered the phenomena; he places us at the standpoint of the man before whom they deploy. And the man, joyous or melancholy, is not a bare spectator of them; he is the student, compounded of sensibility and intelligence, of whom we are not told that he saw so and so, or that he felt so, but with whom we are made copartners of his thoughts and feeling. Description melts into emotion, and contemplation bodies itself in imagery. All the charm of rural life is there, but it is not tendered to us in the form of a landscape; the scenery is subordinated to the human figure in the centre,

These two short idylls are marked by a gladsome spontaneity which never came to Milton again. The delicate fancy and feeling which play about *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* never reappear, and form a strong contrast to the austere imaginings of his later poetical period. These two poems have the freedom and frolic, the natural grace of movement, the improvisation, of the best Elizabethan examples, while both thoughts and words are under a strict economy unknown to the diffuse exuberance of the Spenserians.

In *Lycidas* (1637) we have reached the high-water mark of English poesy and of Milton's own production. A period of a century and a half was to elapse before poetry in England seemed, in Wordsworth's *Ode on Immortality* (1807), to be rising again towards the level of inspiration which it had once attained in *Lycidas.* And in the development of the Miltonic genius this wonderful dirge marks the culminating point. As the twin idylls of 1632 show a great advance upon the *Ode on the Nativity* (1629), the growth of the poetic mind during the five years which follow 1632 is registered in *Lycidas.* Like the *L'Allegro* and *Il Penesroso*, *Lycidas* is laid out on the lines of the accepted pastoral fiction; like them it offers exquisite touches of idealized rural life. But *Lycidas* opens up a deeper vein of feeling, a patric passion so vehement and dangerous that, like that which stirre the Hebrew prophet, it is compelled to veil itself from power, or from sympathy, in utterance made purposely enigmatical. The passage which begins "Last came and last did go" raises in us a thrill of awe-struck expectation which I can only compare with that excited by the Cassandra of Æschylus's *Agamemnon.* For the reader to feel this, he must have present in memory the circumstances of England in 1637. He must place himself as far as possible in the situation of a contemporary. The study of Milton's poetry compels the study of his time; and Professor Masson's six volumes are not too much to enable us to understand that there were real causes for the intense passion which glows underneath the poet's words—a passion which unexplained would be thought to be intrusive.

The historical exposition must be gathered from the English history of the period, which may be read in Professor Mason's excellent summary. All I desire to point out here is, that in *Lycidas* Milton's original picturesque vein is for the first time crossed with one of quite another sort, stern, determined, obscurely indicative of suppressed passion, and the resolution to do or die. The fanaticism of the covenanter and the sad grace of Petrarch seem to meet in Milton's monody. Yet these opposites, instead of neutralizing each other, are blended into one harmonious whole by the presiding, but invisible, genius of the poet. The conflict between the old cavalier world—the years of gayety and festivity of a splendid and pleasure-loving court, and the new Puritan world into which love and pleasure were not to enter—this conflict which was commencing in the social life of England, is also begun in Milton's own breast, and is reflected in *Lycidas*.

> "For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill."

Here is the sweet mournfulness of the Spenserian time, upon whose joys Death is the only intruder. Pass onward a little, and you are in presence of the tremendous

> "Two-handed engine at the door,"

the terror of which is enhanced by its obscurity, We are very sure that the avenger is there, though we know not who he is. In these thirty lines we have the preluding mutterings of the storm which was to sweep away mask and revel and song, to inhibit the drama, and suppress poetry. In the earlier poems Milton's muse has sung in the tones of the age that is passing away; except in his austere chastity, a cavalier. Though even in *L'Allegro* Dr. Johnson truly detects "some melancholy in his mirth." In *Lycidas*, for a moment, the tones of both ages, the past and the coming, are combined, and then Milton leaves behind him forever the golden age, and one half of his poetic genius. He never fulfilled the promise with which *Lycidas* concludes, "To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new."

CHAPTER III.

JOURNEY TO ITALY.

BEFORE 1632 Milton had begun to learn Italian. His mind, just then open on all sides to impressions from books, was peculiarly attracted by Italian poetry. The language grew to be loved for its own sake. Saturated with Dante and Petrarch, Tasso and Ariosto, the desire arose to let the ear drink in the music of Tuscan speech.

The "unhappy gift of beauty," which has attracted the spoiler of all ages to the Italian peninsula, has ever exerted, and still exerts, a magnetic force on every cultivated mind. Manifold are the sources of this fascination now. The scholar and the artist, the antiquarian and the historian, the architect and the lover of natural scenery, alike find here the amplest gratification of their tastes. This is so still; but in the sixteenth century the Italian cities were the only homes of an ancient and decaying civilization. Not insensible to other impressions, it was specially the desire of social converse with the living poets and men of taste—a feeble generation, but one still nourishing the traditions of the great poetic age—which drew Milton across the Alps.

In April, 1637, Milton's mother had died; but his younger brother, Christopher, had come to live, with his wife, in the paternal home at Horton. Milton, the father, was not unwilling that his son should have his foreign tour, as a part of that elaborate education by which he was qualifying himself for his doubtful vocation. The cost was not to stand in the way, considerable as it must have been. Howell's estimate, in his *Instructions for Forreine Travel* (1642), was 300*l.* a year for the tourist himself, and [50*l.* for his man, a sum equal to about 1000*l.* at present.

Among the letters of introduction with which Milton provided himself, one was from the aged Sir Henry Wotton, Provost of Eton, in Milton's immediate neighborhood. Sir Henry, who had lived a long time in Italy, impressed upon his young friend the importance of discretion on the point of religion, and told him the story which he always told to travellers who asked his advice. "At Siena I was tabled in the house of one Alberto Scipioni, an old Roman courtier in dangerous times. . . . At my departure for Rome I had won confidence enough to beg his advice how I might carry myself securely there, without offence of others, or of mine own conscience. 'Signor Arrigo mio,' says he, '*pensieri stretti ed il viso sciolto* (thoughts close, countenance open) will go safely over the whole world.'" Though the intensity of the Catholic reaction had somewhat relaxed in Italy, the deportment of a Protestant in the countries which were terrorized by the Inquisition was a matter which demanded much circumspection. Sir H. Wotton spoke from his own experience of far more rigorous times than those of the Barberini Pope. But he may have noticed, even in his brief acquaintance with Milton, a fearless presumption of speech which was just what was most likely to bring him into trouble. The event proved that the hint was not misplaced. For at Rome itself, in the very lion's den, nothing could content the young zealot but to stand up for his Protestant creed. Milton would not do as Peter Heylin did, who, when asked as to his religion, replied that he was a Catholic, which, in a Laudian, was but a natural equivoque. Milton was resolute in his religion at Rome, so much so that many were deterred from showing him the civilities which they were prepared to offer. His rule, he says, was "not of my own accord to introduce in those places conversation about religion, but, if interrogated respecting the faith, then, whatsoever I should suffer, to dissemble nothing. What I was, if any one asked, I concealed from no one; if any one in the very city of the Pope attacked the orthodox religion, I defended it most freely." Beyond the statement that the English Jesuits were indignant, we hear of no evil consequences of this imprudence. Perhaps the Jesuits saw that Milton was of the stuff that would welcome martyrdom, and were sick of the affair of Galileo, which had terribly damaged the pretensions of their Church.

Milton arrived in Paris April or May, 1638. He received civilities from the English ambassador, Lord Sligo, who at his request gave him an introduction to Grotius. Grotius, says Phillips, "took Milton's visit kindly, and gave him entertainment suitable to his worth and the high commendations he had heard of him." We have no other record of his stay of many days in Paris, though A. Wood supposes that "the manners and graces of that place were not agreeable to his mind." It was August before he reached Florence, by way of Nice and Genoa, and in Florence he spent the two months which we now consider the most impossible there, the months of August and September. Nor did he find, as he would find now, the city deserted by the natives. We hear nothing of Milton's impressions of the place, but of the men whom he met there he retained always a lively and affectionate remembrance, The learned and polite Florentines had not fled to the hills from the stifling heat and blinding glare of the Lung' Arno, but seem to have carried on their literary meetings in defiance of climate. This was the age of academies—an institution, Milton says, "of most praiseworthy effect, both for the cultivation of polite letters and the keeping up of friendships." Florence had five or six such societies, the Florentine, the Della Crusca, the Svogliati, the Apotisti, etc. It is easy, and usual in our day, to speak contemptuously of the literary tone of these academies, fostering, as they did, an amiable and garrulous intercourse of reciprocal compliment, and to contrast them unfavorably with our societies for severe research. They were at least evidence of culture, and served to keep alive the traditions of the more masculine Medicean age. And that the members of these associations were not unaware of their own degeneracy and of its cause, we learn from Milton himself. For as soon as they found that they were safe with the young Briton, they disclosed their own bitter hatred of the Church's yoke which they had to bear. "I have sate among their learned men," Milton wrote in 1644, "and been counted happy to be born in such a place of philosophic freedom as they supposed England was, while themselves did nothing but bemoan the servile condition into which learning amongst them was brought, that this was it which had dampt the glory of Italian wits that nothing had been written there now these many years but flattery and fustian." Milton was introduced at the meetings of their academies; his presence is recorded on two occasions, of which the latest is the 16th September at the Svogliati. He paid his scot by reciting from memory some of his youthful Latin verses, hexameters, "molto erudite," says the minute-book of the sitting, and others, which "I shifted, in the scarcity of books and conveniencies, to patch up." He obtained much credit by these exercises, which, indeed, deserved it by comparison. He ventured upon the perilous experiment of offering some compositions in Italian, which the fastidious Tuscan ear at least professed to include in those "encomiums which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side the Alps."

The author of *Lycidas* cannot but have been quite aware of the small poetical merit of such an ode as that which was addressed to him by Francini. In this ode Milton is the swan of Thames—"Thames, which, owing to thee, rivals Bœotian Permessus," and so forth. But there is a genuine feeling, an ungrudging warmth of sympathetic recognition underlying the trite and tumid panegyric. And Milton may have yielded to the not unnatural impulse of showing his countrymen that though not a prophet in boorish and fanatical England, he had found recognition in the home of letters and arts. Upon us is forced, by this their different reception of Milton, the contrast between the two countries, Italy and England, in the middle of the seventeenth century. The rude North, whose civilization was all to come, concentrating all its intelligence in a violent effort to work off the ecclesiastical poison from its system, is brought into sharp contrast with the sweet South, whose civilization is behind it, and whose intellect, after a severe struggle, has succumbed to the material force and organization of the Church.

As soon as the season allowed of it, Milton set forward to Rome, taking what was then the usual way by Siena. At Rome he spent two months, occupying himself partly with seeing the antiquities, and partly with cultivating the acquaintance of natives, and some of the many foreigners resident in the eternal city. But though he received much civility, we do not find that he met with the peculiar sympathy which endeared to him his Tuscan friends. His chief ally was the German, Lucas Holstenius, a native of Hamburg, who had abjured Protestantism to become librarian of the Vatican. Holstenius had resided three years in Oxford, and considered himself bound to repay to the English scholar some of the attentions he had received himself. Through Holstenius Milton was presented to the nephew, Francesco Barberini, who was just then everything in Rome. It was at a concert at the Barberini palace that Milton heard Leonora Baroni sing. His three Latin epigrams addressed to this lady, the first singer of Italy, or of the world at that time, testify to the enthusiasm she excited in the musical soul of Milton.

Nor are these three epigrams the only homage which Milton paid to Italian beauty. The susceptible poet, who in the sunless North would fain have "sported with the tangles of Neæra's hair," could not behold Neæra herself, and the flashing splendor of her eye, unmoved. Milton proclaims (*Defensio Secunda*) that in all his foreign tour he had lived clear from all that is disgraceful. But the pudicity of his behavior and language covers a soul tremulous with emotion, whose passion was intensified by the discipline of a chaste intention. Five Italian pieces among his poems are to the address of another lady, whose "majestic movements and love-darting dark brow" had subdued him. The charm lay in the novelty of this style of beauty to one who came from the land of the "vermeil-tinctur'd cheek" (*Comus*) and the "golden nets of hair" (*El.* i. 60). No clue has been discovered to the name of this divinity, or to the occasion on which Milton saw her.

Of Milton's impressions of Rome there is no record. There are no traces of special observation in his poetry. The description of the city in *Paradise Regained* (iv. 32) has nothing characteristic, and could have been written by one who had never seen it, and by many as well as by Milton. We get one glimpse of him by aid of the register of the English College, as dining there at a "sumptuous entertainment" on 30th October, when he met Nicholas Carey, brother of Lord Falkland. In spite of Sir Henry Wotton's caution, his resoluteness, as A. Wood calls it, in his religion, besides making the English Jesuits indignant, caused others, not Jesuits, to withhold civilities. Milton only tells us himself that the antiquities detained him in Rome about two months.

At the end of November he went to Naples. On the road he fell in with an Eremite friar, who gave him an introduction to the one man in Naples whom it was important he should know, Giovanni Battista Manso, Marquis of Villa. The marquis, now seventy-eight, had been for two generations the Mæcenas of letters in Southern Italy. He had sheltered Tasso in the former generation, and Marini in the latter. It was the singular privilege of his old age that he should now entertain a third poet, greater than either. In spite of his years, he was able to act as cicerone to the young Englishman over the scenes which he himself, in his *Life of Tasso*, has described with the enthusiasm of a poet. But even the high-souled Manso quailed before the terrors of the Inquisition, and apologized to Milton for not having shown him greater attention, because he would not be more circumspect in the matter of religion. Milton's Italian journey brings out the two conflicting strains of feeling which were uttered together in *Lycidas*, the poet's impressibility by nature, the freeman's indignation at clerical domination.

The time was now at hand when the latter passion, the noble rage of freedom, was to suppress the more delicate flower of poetic imagination. Milton's original scheme had included Sicily and Greece. The serious aspect of affairs at home compelled him to renounce his project. "I considered it dishonorable to be enjoying myself at my ease in foreign lands, while my countrymen were striking a blow for freedom." He retraced his steps leisurely enough, however, making a halt of two months in Rome, and again one or two months in Florence. We find him mentioned in the minutes of the academy of the Svogliati as having been present at three of their weekly meetings, on the 17th, 24th, and 31st March, But the most noteworthy incident of his second Florentine residence is his interview with Galileo. He had been unable to see the veteran martyr of science on his first visit. For though Galileo was at that time living within the walls, he was kept a close prisoner by the Inquisition, and not allowed either to set foot outside his own door, or to receive visits from non-Catholics. In the spring of 1639, however, he was allowed to go back to his villa at Gioiella, near Arcetri, and Milton obtained admission to him, old, frail, and blind, but in full possession of his mental faculty. There is observable in Milton, as Mr. Masson suggests, a prophetic fascination of the fancy on the subject of blindness. And the deep impression left by this sight of "the Tuscan artist" is evidenced by the feeling with which Galileo's name and achievement are imbedded in *Paradise Lost.*

From Florence, Milton crossed the Apennines by Bologna and Ferrara to Venice. From this port he shipped for England the books he had collected during his tour, books curious and rare as they seemed to Phillips, and among them a chest or two of choice music books. The month of April was spent at Venice, and bidding farewell to the beloved land he would never visit again, Milton passed the Alps to Geneva.

No Englishman's foreign prilgrimage was complete without touching at this marvellous capital of the reformed faith, which with almost no resources had successfully braved the whole might of the Catholic reaction. The only record of Milton's stay at Geneva is the album of a Neapolitan refugee, to which Milton contributed his autograph, under date 10th June, 1639, with the following quotation :—

"If virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her."
(From *Comus.*)
"Cœlum non animum muto, dum trans mare curro."
(From *Horace.*)

But it is probable that he was a guest in the house of one of the leading pastors, Giovanni Diodati, whose nephew Charles, a physician commencing practice in London, was Milton's bosom friend. Here Milton first heard of the death, in the previous August, of that friend. It was a heavy blow to him, for one of the chief pleasures of being at home again would have been to pour into a sympathetic Italian ear the story of his adventures. The sadness of the homeward journey from Geneva is recorded for us in the *Epitaphium Damonis.* This piece is an elegy to the memory of Charles Diodati. It unfortunately differs from the elegy on King in being written in Latin, and is thus inaccessible to uneducated readers. As to such readers the topic of Milton's Latin poetry is necessarily an ungrateful subject, I will dismiss it here with one remark. Milton's Latin verses are distinguished from most Neo-latin verse by being a vehicle of real emotion. His technical skill is said to have been surpassed by others ; but that in which he stands alone is that in these exercises of imitative art he is able to remain himself, and to give utterance to genuine passion. Artificial Arcadianism is as much the frame-work of the elegy on Diodati as it is of *Lycidas.* We have Daphnis and Bion, Tityrus and

Amyntas for characters, Sicilian valleys for scenery, while Pan, Pales, and the Fauns represent the supernatural. The shepherds defend their flocks from wolves and lions. But this factitious bucolicism is pervaded by a pathos which, like volcanic heat, has fused into a new compound the dilapidated débris of the Theocritean world. And in the Latin elegy there is more tenderness than in the English. Charles Diodati was much nearer to Milton than had been Edward King. The sorrow in *Lycidas* is not so much personal as it is the regret of the society of Christ's. King had only been known to Milton as one of the students of the same college; Diodati was the associate of his choice in riper manhood.

The *Epitaphium Damonis* is further memorable as Milton's last attempt in serious Latin verse. He discovered in this experiment that Latin was not an adequate vehicle of the feeling he desired to give vent to. In the concluding lines he takes a formal feeling of the Latin muse, and announces his purpese of adopting henceforth the "harsh and grating Brittonic idiom" (*Brittonicum stridens*).

SECOND PERIOD. 1640–1660.

CHAPTER IV.

EDUCATIONAL THEORY—TEACHING

MILTON was back in England in August, 1639. He had been absent a year and three months, during which space of time the aspect of public affairs, which had been perplexed and gloomy when he left, had been growing still more ominous of a coming storm. The issues of the controversy were so pervasive that it was almost impossible for any educated man who understood them not to range himself on a side. Yet Milton, though he had broken off his projected tour in consequence, did not rush into the fray on his return. He resumed his retired and studious life, "with no small delight, cheerfully leaving," as he says, "the event of public affairs first to God, and then to those to whom the people had committed that task."

He did not return to Horton, but took lodgings in London, in the house of Russel, a tailor, in St. Bride's churchyard, at the city end of Fleet Street, on the side of what is now Farringdon Street. There is no attempt on the part of Milton to take up a profession, not even for the sake of appearances. The elder Milton was content to provide the son, of whom he was proud, with the means of prosecuting his eccentric scheme of life, to continue, namely, to prepare himself for some great work, nature unknown.

For a young man of simple habits and studious life a little suffices. The chief want is books, and of these, for Milton's style of reading, select rather than copious, a large collection is superfluous. There were in 1040 no public libraries in London, and a scholar had to find his own store of books or to borrow from his friends. Milton never can have possessed a large library. At Horton he may have used Kederminster's bequest to Langley Church. Still, with his Italian acquisitions, added to the books that he already possessed, he soon found a lodging too narrow for his accommodation, and removed to a house of his own, "a pretty garden house, in Aldersgate, at the end of an entry." Aldersgate was outside the city walls, on the verge of the open country of Islington, and was a genteel though not a fashionable quarter. There were few streets in London, says Phillips, more free from noise.

He had taken in hand the education of his two nephews, John and Edward Phillips, sons of his only sister Anne. Anne was a few years older than her brother John. Her first husband, Edward Phillips, had died in 1631, and the widow had given her two sons a step-father in one Thomas Agar, who was in the Clerk of the Crown's office. Milton, on settling in London in 1639, had at once taken his younger nephew John to live with him. When, in 1640, he removed to Aldersgate, the elder, Edward, also came under his roof.

If it was affection for his sister which first moved Milton to undertake the tuition of her sons, he soon developed a taste for the occupation. In 1643 he began to receive into his house other pupils, but only, says Phillips (who is solicitous that his uncle should not be thought to have kept a school), "the sons of some gentlemen that were his intimate friends." He threw into his lessons the same energy which he carried into everything else. In his eagerness to find a place for everything that could be learnt, there could have been few hours in the day which were not invaded by teaching. He had exchanged the contemplative leisure of Horton for a busy life, in which no hour but had its calls. Even on Sundays there were lessons in the Greek Testament and dictations of a system of Divinity in Latin. His pamphlets of this period betray, in their want of measure and equilibrium, even in their heated style and passion-flushed language, the life at high pressure which their author was leading.

We have no account of Milton's method of teaching from any competent pupil. Edward Phillips was an amiable and upright man, who earned his living respectably by tuition and the compilation of books. He held his uncle's memory in great veneration. But when he comes to describe the education he received at his uncle's hands, the only characteristic on which he dwells is that of quantity. Phillips's account is, however, supplemented for us by Milton's written theory. His *Tractate of Education to Master Samuel Hartlib* is probably known even to those who have never looked at anything else of Milton's in prose.

Of all the practical arts, that of education seems the most cumbrous in its method, and to be productive of the smallest results with the most lavish expenditure of means. Hence the subject of education is one which is always luring on the innovator and the theorist. Every one, as he grows up, becomes aware of time lost, and effort misapplied, in his own case. It is not unnatural to desire to save our children from a like waste of power. And in a time such as was that of Milton's youth, when all traditions were being questioned, and all institutions were to be remodelled, it was certain that the school would be among the earliest objects to attract an experimental reformer. Among the advanced minds of the time there had grown up a deep dissatisfaction with the received methods of our schools, and more especially of our universities. The great instaurator of all knowledge, Bacon, in preaching the necessity of altering the whole method of knowing, included as matter of course the method of teaching to know.

The man who carried over the Baconian aspiration into education was Comenius (d. 1670). A projector and enthusiast, Comenius desired, like Bacon, an entirely new intellectual era. With Bacon's intellectual ambition, but without Bacon's capacity, Comenius proposed to revolutionize all knowledge, and to make complete wisdom accessible to all, in a brief space of time, and with a minimum of labor. Language only as an instrument, not as an end in itself; many living languages, instead of the one dead language of the old school; a knowledge of things, instead of words; the free use of our eyes and ears upon the nature that surrounds us; intelligent apprehension, instead of loading the memory—all these doctrines, afterwards inherited by the party of rational reform, were first promulgated in Europe by the numerous pamphlets—some ninety have been reckoned up—of this Teuto-Slav, Comenius.

Comenius had as the champion of his views in England Samuel Hartlib, a Dantziger by origin, settled in London since 1628. Hartlib had even less of real science than Comenius, but he was equally possessed by the Baconian ideal of a new heaven and a new earth of knowledge. Not himself a discoverer in any branch, he was unceasingly occupied in communicating the discoveries and inventions of others. He had an ear for every novelty of whatever kind, interesting himself in social, religious, philanthropic schemes, as well as in experiments in the arts. A sanguine universality of benevolence pervaded that generation of ardent souls, akin only in their common anticipation of an unknown Utopia. A secret was within the reach of human ingenuity which would make all mankind happy. But there were two directions more especially in which Hartlib's zeal without knowledge abounded.

These were a grand scheme for the union of Protestant Christendom, and his propagand of Comenius's school-reform.

For the first of these projects it was not likely that Hartlib would gain a proselyte in Milton, who had at one-and-twenty judged Anglican orders a servitude, and was already chafing against the restraints of Presbytery. But on his other hobby, that of school-reform, Milton was not only sympathetic, but when Hartlib came to talk with him, he found that most or all of Comenius's ideas had already independently presented themselves to the reflection or experience of the Englishman. At Hartlib's request Milton consented to put down his thoughts on paper, and even to print them in a quarto pamphlet of eight pages, entitled, *Of Education : to Master Samuel Hartlib.*

This tract, often reproduced and regarded, along with one of Locke's, as a substantial contribution to the subject, must often have grievously disappointed those who have eagerly consulted it for practical hints or guidance of any kind. Its interest is wholly biographical. It cannot be regarded as a valuable contribution to educational theory, but it is strongly marked with the Miltonic individuality. We find in it the same lofty conception of the aim which Milton carried into everything he attempted ; the same disdain of the beaten routine, and proud reliance upon his own resources. He had given vent elsewhere to his discontent with the system of Cambridge, "which, as in the time of her better health, and mine own younger judgment, I never greatly admired, so now (1642) much less." In the letter to Hartlib he denounces with equal fierceness the schools and "the many mistakes which have made learning generally so unpleasing and so unsuccessful." The alumni of the universities carry away with them a hatred and contempt for learning, and sink into "ignorantly zealous" clergymen, or mercenary lawyers, while the men of fortune betake themselves to feasts and jollity. These last, Milton thinks, are the best of the three classes.

All these moral shipwrecks are the consequence, according to Milton, of bad education. It is in our power to avert them by a reform of schools. But the measures of reform, when produced, are ludicrously incommensurable with the evils to be remedied. I do not trouble the reader with recounting the proposals ; they are only a form of the well-known educational fallacy—the communication of useful knowledge. The doctrine as propounded in the *Tractate* is complicated by the further difficulty that the knowledge is to be gathered out of Greek and Latin books This doctrine is advocated by Milton with the ardor of his own lofty enthusiasm. In virtue of the grandeur of zeal which inspires them, these pages, which are in substance nothing more than the now familiar omniscient examiner's programme, retain a place as one of our classics. The fine definition of education here given has never been improved upon : "I call a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war." This is the true Milton. When he offers, in another page, as equivalent a definition of the true end of learning, "to repair the ruin of our first parents by regaining to know God aright," we have the theological Milton, and what he took on from the current language of his age.

Milton saw strongly, as many have done before and since, one weak point in the practice of schools, namely, the small result of much time. He fell into the natural error of the inexperienced teacher, that of supposing that the remedy was the ingestion of much and diversified intelligible matter. It requires much observation of young minds to discover that the rapid inculcation of unassimilated information stupefies the faculties instead of training them. Is it fanciful to think that in Edward Phillips, who was always employing his superficial pen upon topics with which he snatched a fugitive acquaintance, we have a concrete example of the natural result of the Miltonic system of instruction?

CHAPTER V.

MARRIAGE, AND PAMPHLETS ON DIVORCE.

We have seen that Milton turned back from his unaccomplished tour because he "deemed it disgraceful to be idling away his time abroad for his own gratification, while his countrymen were contending for their liberty." From these words biographers have inferred that he hurried home with the view to taking service in the Parliamentarian army. This interpretation of his words seems to receive confirmation from what Phillips thinks he had heard—"I am much mistaken if there were not about this time a design in agitation of making him Adjutant-General in Sir William Waller's army." Phillips very likely thought that a recruit could enlist as an Adjutant-General, but it does not appear from Milton's own words that he himself ever contemplated service in the field. The words "contending for liberty" (de libertate dimicarent) could not, as said of the winter 1638–39, mean anything more than the strife of party. And when war did break out, it must have been obvious to Milton that he could serve the cause better as a scholar than as a soldier.

That he never took service in the army is certain. If there was a time when he should have been found in the ranks, it was on the 12th November, 1642, when every able-bodied citizen turned out to oppose the march of the king, who had advanced to Brentford. But we have the evidence of the sonnet—

"Captain, or Colonel, or Knight in arms," that Milton, on this occasion, stayed at home. He had, as he announced in February, 1642, "taken labor and intent study" to be his portion in this life. He did not contemplate enlisting his pen in the service of the Parliament, but the exaltation of his country's glory by the composition of some monument of the English language, as Dante or Tasso had done for Italian. But a project ambitious as this lay too far off to be put in execution as soon as thought of. The ultimate purpose had to give place to the immediate. One of these interludes, originating in Milton's personal relations, was his series of tracts on divorce.

In the early part of the summer of 1643, Milton took a sudden journey into the country, "nobody about him certainly knowing the reason, or that it was any more than a journey of recreation." He was absent about a month, and when he returned he brought back a wife with him. Nor was the bride alone. She was attended "by some few of her nearest relations," and there was feasting and celebration of the nuptials in the house in Aldersgate Street.

The bride's name was Mary, eldest daughter of Richard Powell, Esq., of Forest Hill, J. P. for the county of Oxford. Forest Hill is a village and parish about five miles from Oxford on the Thame road, where Mr. Powell had a house and a small estate of some 300*l.* a year, value of that day. Forest Hill was within the ancient royal forest of Shotover, of which Mr. Powell was lessee. The reader will remember that the poet's father was born at Stanton St. John, the adjoining parish to Forest Hill, and that Richard Milton, the grandfather, had been under-ranger of the royal forest. There had been many transactions between the Milton and the Powell families as far back as 1627. In paying a visit to that neighborhood, Milton was both returning to the district which had been the home of all the Miltons, and renewing an old acquaintance with the Powell family. Mr. Powell, though in receipt of a fair income for a country gentleman—300*l.* a year of that day may be roughly valued at 1000*l.* of our day—and his wife had brought him 3000*l.*, could not live within his means. His children were numerous, and, belonging to the cavalier party, his house was conducted with the careless and easy hospitality of a royalist gentleman. Twenty years before he had begun borrowing, and among other persons had had recourse to the prosperous and saving scrivener of Bread Street. He was already mortgaged to the Miltons, father and sons, more deeply than his estate had any prospect of paying, which was perhaps the reason why he found no difficulty in promising a portion of 1000*l.* with his daughter. Milton, with a poet's want of caution, or indifference to money, and with a lofty masculine disregard of the temper and character of the girl he asked to share his life, came home with his bride in triumph, and held feasting in celebration of his hasty and ill-considered choice. It was a beginning of sorrows to him. Hitherto, up to his thirty-fifth year, independent master of leisure and the delights of literature, his years had passed without a check or a shadow. From this day forward domestic misery, the importunities of business, the clamor of controversy, crowned by the crushing calamity of blindness, were to be his portion for more than thirty years. Singular among poets in the serene fortune of the first half of life, in the second half his piteous fate was to rank in wretchedness with that of his masters, Dante or Tasso.

The biographer, acquainted with the event, has no difficulty in predicting it, and in saying at this point in his story that Milton might hove known better than, with his puritanical connections, to have taken to wife a daughter of a cavalier house, to have brought her from a roystering home, frequented by the dissolute officers of the Oxford garrison, to the spare diet and philosophical retirement of a recluse student, and to have looked for sympathy and response for his speculations from an uneducated and frivolous girl. Love has blinded, and will continue to blind, the wisest men to calculations as easy and as certain as these. And Milton, in whose soul Puritan austerity was as yet only contending with the more genial currents of humanity, had a far greater than average susceptibility to the charm of woman. Even at the later date of *Paradise Lost*, voluptuous thoughts, as Mr. Hallam has observed, are not uncongenial to him. And at an earlier age his poems, candidly pure from the lascivious innuendoes of his contemporaries, have preserved the record of the rapid impression of the momentary passage of beauty upon his susceptible mind. Once, at twenty, he was all on flame by the casual meeting, in one of his walks in the suburbs of London, with a damsel whom he never saw again. Again, Sonnets III. to V. tell how he fell before the new type of foreign beauty which crossed his path at Bologna. A similar surprise of his fancy at the expense of his judgment seems to have happened on the present occasion of his visit to Shotover. There is no evidence that Mary Powell was handsome, and we may be sure that it would have been mentioned if she had been. But she had youth and country freshness; her "unliveliness and natural sloth unfit for conversation" passed as "the bashful muteness of a virgin;" and if a doubt intruded that he was being too hasty, Milton may have thought that a girl of seventeen could be moulded at pleasure.

He was too soon undeceived. His dream of married happiness barely lasted out the honeymoon. He found that he had mated himself to a clod of earth, who not only was not now, but had not the capacity of becoming, a helpmeet for him. With Milton, as with the whole Calvinistic and Puritan Europe, woman was a creature of an inferior and subordinate class. Man was the final cause of God's creation, and woman was there to minister to this nobler being. In his dogmatic treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton formulated this sentiment in the thesis, borrowed from the schoolmen, that the soul was communicated "in semine patris." The cavalier section of society had inherited the sentiment of chivalry, and contrasted with the roundhead not more by its loyalty to the person of the prince, than by its recognition of the superior grace and refinement of womanhood. Even in the debased and degenerate epoch of court life which followed 1660, the forms and language of homage still preserved the tradition of a nobler scheme of manners. The Puritan had thrown off chivalry as being parcel of Catholicism, and had replaced it by the Hebrew ideal of the subjection and seclusion of woman. Milton, in whose mind the rigidity of Puritan doctrine was now contending with the freer spirit of culture and romance, shows on the present occasion a like conflict of doctrine with sentiment. While he adopts the Oriental hypothesis of woman for the sake of man, he modifies it by laying more stress upon mutual affection, the charities of home, and the intercommunion of intellectual and moral life, than upon that ministration of woman to the appetite and comforts of man which makes up the whole of her functions in the Puritan apprehension. The failure in his own case to obtain this genial companionship of soul, which he calls "the gentlest end of marriage," is what gave the keenest edge to his disappointment in his matrimonial venture.

But however keenly he felt and regretted the precipitancy which had yoked him for life to "a mute and spiritless maid," the breach did not come from his side. The girl herself conceived an equal repugnance to the husband she had thoughtlessly accepted, probably on the strength of his good looks, which was all of Milton that she was capable of appreciating. A young bride, taken suddenly from the freedom of a jovial and an undisciplined home, rendered more lax by civil confusion and easy intercourse with the officers of the royalist garrison, and committed to the sole society of a stranger, and that stranger possessing the rights of a husband, and expecting much from all who lived with him, may not unnaturally have been seized with panic terror, and wished herself home again. The young Mrs. Milton not only wished it, but incited her family to write and beg that she might be allowed to go home to stay the remainder of the summer. The request to quit her husband at the end of the first month was so unreasonable that the parents would hardly have made it if they had not suspected some profound cause of estrangement. Nor could Milton have consented, as he did, to so extreme a remedy, unless he had felt that the case required no less, and that her mother's advice and influence were the most available means of awakening his wife to a sense of her duty. Milton's consent was therefore given. He may have thought it desirable she should go, and thus Mrs. Powell would not have been going very much beyond the truth when she pretended some years afterwards that her son-in-law had turned away his wife for a long space.

Mary Milton went to Forest Hill in July, but on the understanding that she was to come back at Michaelmas. When the appointed time came she did not appear. Milton wrote for her to come. No answer. Several other letters met the same fate. At last he despatched a foot messenger to Forest Hill desiring her return. The messenger came back only to report that he had been "dismissed with some sort of contempt." It was evident that Mary Milton's family had espoused her cause as against her husband. Whatever may have been the secret motive of their conduct, they explained the quarrel politically, and began to repent, so Phillips thought, of having matched the eldest daughter of their house with a violent Presbyterian.

If Milton had "hasted too eagerly to light the nuptial torch," he had been equally ardent in his calculations of the domestic happiness upon which he was to enter. His poet's imagination had invested a dull and common girl with rare attributes moral and intellectual, and had pictured for him the state of matrimony as an earthly paradise, in which he was to be secure of a response of affection showing itself in a communion of intelligent interests. In proportion to the brilliancy of his ideal anticipation was the fury of despair which came upon him when he found out his mistake. A common man, in a common age, would have vented his vexation upon the individual. Milton, living at a time when controversy turned away from details, and sought to dig down to the roots of every question, instead of urging the hardships of his own case, set to to consider the institution of marriage in itself. He published a pamphlet with the title, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, at first anonymously, but putting his name to a second edition, much enlarged. He further reinforced this argument in chief with three supplementary pamphlets, partly in answer to opponents and objectors, for there was no lack of opposition, indeed of outcry loud and fierce.

A biographer closely scans the pages of these pamphlets, not for the sake of their direct argument, but to see if he can extract from them any indirect hints of their author's personal relations. There is found in them no mention of Milton's individual case. Had we no other information, we should not be authorized to infer from them that the question of the marriage tie was more than an abstract question with the author.

But though all mention of his own case is studiously avoided by Milton, his pamphlet, when read by the light of Phillips's brief narrative, does seem to give some assistance in apprehending the circumstances of this obscure passage of the poet's life. The mystery has always been felt by the biographers, but has assumed a darker hue since the discovery by Mr. Masson of a copy of the first edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, with the written date of August 1. According to Phillips's narrative, the pamphlet was engendered by Milton's indignation at his wife's contemptuous treatment of him, in refusing to keep the engagement to return at Michaelmas, and would therefore be composed in October and November, time enough to allow for the sale of the edition, and the preparation of the enlarged edition, which came out in February, 1644. But if the date "August 1" for the first edition be correct, we have to suppose that Milton was occupying himself with the composition of a vehement and impassioned argument in favor of divorce for incompatibility of temper during the honeymoon! Such behavior on Milton's part, he being thirty-five, towards a girl of seventeen, to whom he was bound to show all loving tenderness, is so horrible that a suggestion has been made that there was a more adequate cause for his displeasure, a suggestion which Milton's biographer is bound to notice, even if he does not adopt it. The suggestion, which I believe was first made by a writer in the *Athenæum*, is that Milton's young wife refused him the consummation of the marriage. The supposition is founded upon a certain passage in Milton's pamphlet.

If the early date of the pamphlet be the true date; if the *Doctrine and Discipline* was in the hands of the public on August 1; if Milton was brooding over this seething agony of passion all through July, with the young bride, to whom he had been barely wed a month, in the house where he was writing, then the only apology for this outrage upon the charities, not to say decencies, of home is that which is suggested by the passage referred to. Then the pamphlet, however imprudent, becomes pardonable. It is a passionate cry from the depths of a great despair; another evidence of the noble purity of a nature which refused to console itself as other men would have consoled themselves; a nature which, instead of an egotistical whine for its own deliverance, sets itself to plead the common cause of man and of society. He gives no intimation of any individual interest, but his argument throughout glows with a white heat of concealed emotion, such as could only be stirred by the sting of some personal and present misery.

Notwithstanding the amount of free opinion abroad in England, or at least in London, at this date, Milton's divorce pamphlets created a sensation of that sort which Gibbon is fond of calling a scandal. A scandal, in this sense, must always arise in your own party; you cannot scandalize the enemy. And so it was now. The Episcopalians were rejoiced that Milton should ruin his credit with his own side by advocating a paradox. The Presbyterians hastened to disown a man who enabled their opponents to brand their religious scheme as the parent of moral heresies. For though church government and the English constitution in all its parts had begun to be open questions, speculation had not as yet attacked either of the two bases of society, property or the family. Loud was the outcry of the Philistines. There was no doubt that the rigid bonds of Presbyterian orthodoxy would not in any case have long held Milton. They were snapped at once by the publication of his opinions on divorce, and Milton is henceforward to be ranked among the most independent of the new party which shortly after this date began to be heard of under the name of Independents.

But the men who formed the nucleus of this new mode of thinking were as yet, in 1643, not consolidated into a sect, still less was their importance as the coming political party dreamt of. At present they were units, only drawn to each other by the sympathy of opinion. The contemptuous epithets Anabaptist, Antinomian, etc., could be levelled against them with fatal effect by every Philistine, and were freely used on this occasion against Milton. He says of himself that he now lived in a world of disesteem. Nor was there wanting, to complete his discomfiture, the practical parody of the doctrine of divorce. A Mistress Attaway, lacewoman in Bell Alley, and she-preacher in Coleman Street, had been reading Master Milton's book, and remembered that she had an unsanctified husband who did not speak the language of Canaan. She further reflected that Mr. Attaway was not only unsanctified, but was also absent with the army, while William Jenney was on the spot, and, like herself, also a preacher. Could a "scandalized" Presbyterian help pointing the finger of triumphant scorn at such examples, the natural fruits of that mischievous book, *The Doctrine and Discipline?*

Beyond the stage of scandal and disesteem the matter did not proceed. In dedicating *The Doctrine and Discipline* to the Parliament, Milton had specially called on that assembly to legislate for the relief of men who were encumbered with unsuitable spouses. No notice was taken of this appeal, as there was far other work on hand, and no particular pressure from without in the direction of Milton's suit. Divorce for incompatibility of temper remained his private crotchet, or obtained converts only among his fellow-sufferers, who, however numerous, did not form a body important enough to enforce by clamor their demand for relief.

Milton was not very well pleased to find that the Parliament had no ear for the bitter cry of distress wrung from their ardent admirer and stanch adherent. Accordingly, in 1645, in dedicating the last of the divorce pamphlets, which he entitled *Tetrachordon*, to the Parliament, he concluded with a threat, "If the law make not a timely provision, let the law, as reason is, bear the censure of the consequences."

This threat he was prepared to put in execution, and did, in 1645, as Phillips tells us, contemplate a union, which could not have been a marriage, with another woman. He was able at this time to find some part of that solace of conversation which his wife failed to give him, among his female acquaintance. Especially we find him at home in the house of one of the Parliamentary women, the Lady Margaret Ley, a lady "of great wit and ingenuity," the "honored Margaret" of Sonnet X. But the Lady Margaret was a married woman, being the wife of a Captain Hobson, a "very accomplished gentleman," of the Isle of Wight. The young lady who was the object of his attentions, and who, if she were the "virtuous young lady" of Sonnet IX., was "in the prime of earliest youth," was a daughter of a Dr. Davis, of whom nothing else is now known. She is described by Phillips, who may have seen her, as a very handsome and witty gentlewoman. Though Milton was ready to brave public opinion, Miss Davis was not. And so the suit hung, when all schemes of the kind were put an end to by the unexpected submission of Mary Powell.

Since October, 1643, when Milton's messenger had been dismissed from Forest Hill, the face of the civil struggle was changed. The Presbyterian army had been replaced by that of the Independents, and the immediate consequence had been the decline of the royal cause, consummated by its total ruin on the day of Naseby, in June, 1645. Oxford was closely invested, Forest Hill occupied by the besiegers, and the Powell family compelled to take refuge within the lines of the city. Financial bankruptcy, too, had overtaken the Powells. These influences, rather than any rumors which may have reached them of Milton's designs in regard to Miss Davis, wrought a change in the views of the Powell family. By the triumph of the Independents Mr. Milton was become a man of consideration, and might be useful as a protector. They concluded that the best thing they could do was to seek a reconciliation. There were not wanting friends of Milton's also, some perhaps divining his secret discontent, who thought that such reconciliation would be beter for him too, than perilling his happiness upon the experiment of an illegal connection. A conspiracy of the friends of both parties contrived to introduce Mary Powell into a house where Milton often visited in St. Martin's-le-Grand. She was secreted in an adjoining room, on an occasion when Milton was known to be coming, and he was surprised by seeing her suddenly brought in, throw herself on her knees, and ask to be forgiven. The poor young thing, now two years older and wiser, but still only nineteen, pleaded, truly or falsely, that her mother "had been all along the chief promoter of her frowardness." Milton, with a "noble leonine clemency" which became him, cared not for excuses for the past. It was enough that she was come back, and was willing to live with him as his wife. He received her at once, and not only her, but on the surrender of Oxford, in June, 1646, and the sequestration of Forest Hill, took in the whole family of Powells, including the mother-in-law, whose influence with her daughter might even again trouble his peace.

It is impossible not to see that Milton had this impressive scene, enacted in St. Martin's-le-Grand, in 1645, before his mind, when he wrote, twenty years afterwards, the lines in *Paradise Lost*, x. 937:—

"Eve, with tears that ceas'd not flowing
And tresses all disorder'd, at his feet
Fell humble, and embracing them, besought
His peace . . . .
Her lowly plight
Immovable, till peace obtain'd from fault
Acknowledg'd and deplor'd, in Adam wrought
Commiseration; soon his heart relented
Tow'rds her, his life so late and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress!
Creature so fair his reconcilement seeking,
* * * * *
At once disarm'd, his anger all he lost."

The garden-house in Aldersgate Street had before been found too small for the pupils who were being now pressed upon Milton. It was to a larger house in Barbican, a side street leading out of Aldersgate, that he brought the Powells and Mary Milton. Milton probably abated his exactions on the point of companionship, and learned to be content with her acquiescence in the duties of a wife. In July, 1646, she became a mother, and bore in all four children. Of these, three, all daughters, lived to grow up. Mary Milton herself died in giving birth to the fourth child in the summer of 1652. She was only twenty-six, and had been married to Milton nine years.

CHAPTER VI.

PAMPHLETS.

WE have now seen Milton engaged in teaching and writing on education, involved in domestic unhappiness, and speculating on the obligations of marriage. But neither of these topics formed the principal occupation of his mind during these years. He had renounced a cherished scheme of travel, because his countrymen were engaged at home in contending for their liberties, and it could not but be that the gradually intensified stages of that struggle engrossed his interest, and claimed his participation.

So imperative did he regard this claim that he allowed it to override the purposed dedication of his life to poetry. Not indeed for ever and aye, but for a time. As he had renounced Greece, the Ægean Isles, Thebes, and the East for the fight for freedom, so now to the same cause he postponed the composition of his epic of Arthurian romance, or whatever his mind "in the spacious circuits of her musing proposed to herself of highest hope and hardest attempting." No doubt at first, in thus deferring the work of his life, he thought the delay would be for a brief space. He did not foresee that having once taken an oar, he would be chained to it for more than twenty years, and that he would finally owe his release to the ruin of the cause he had served. But for the Restoration and the overthrow of the Puritans, we should never have had the great Puritan epic.

The period then of his political activity is to be regarded as an episode in the life of the poet Milton. It is indeed an episode which fills twenty years, and those the most vigorous years of manhood, from his thirty-second to his fifty-second year. He himself was conscious of the sacrifice he was making, and apologizes to the public for thus defrauding them of the better work which he stood pledged to execute. As he puts it, there was no choice for him. He could not help himself, at this critical juncture, "when the Church of God was at the foot of her insulting enemies;" he would never have ceased to reproach himself, if he had refused to employ the fruits of his studies in her behalf. He saw also that a generation inflamed by the passions of conflict, and looking in breathless suspense for the issue of battles, was not in a mood to attend to poetry. Nor, indeed, was he ready to write, "not having yet (this is in 1642) completed to my mind the full circle of my private studies."

But though he is drawn into the strife against his will, and in defiance of his genius, when he is in it he throws into it the whole vehemence of his nature. The pamphlet period, I have said, is an episode in the life of the poet. But it is a genuine part of Milton's life. However his ambition may have been set upon an epic crown, his zeal for what he calls the church was an equal passion, nay, had, in his judgment, a paramount claim upon him. He is a zealot among the zealots; his cause is the cause of God; and the sword of the Independents is the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. He does not refute opponents, but curses enemies. Yet his rage, even when most delirious, is always a Miltonic rage; it is grand, sublime, terrible! Mingled with the scurrilities of the theological brawl are passages of the noblest English ever written. Hartley Coleridge explains the dulness of the wit-combats in Shakespere and Jonson, on the ground that repartee is the accomplishment of lighter thinkers and a less earnest age. So of Milton's pamphlets it must be said that he was not fencing for pastime, but fighting for all he held most worthy. He had to think only of making his blows tell. When a battle is raging, and my friends are sorely pressed, am I not to help because good manners forbid the shedding of blood?

No good man can, with impunity, addict himself to party. And the best men will suffer most, because their conviction of the goodness of their cause is deeper. But when one with the sensibility of a poet throws himself into the excitements of a struggle, he is certain to lose his balance. The endowment of feeling and imagination which qualifies him to be the ideal interpreter of life, unfits him for participation in that real life, through the manœuvres and compromises of which reason is the only guide, and where imagination is as much misplaced as it would be in a game of chess. "The ennobling difference between one man and another is that one feels more than another." Milton's capacity of emotion, when once he became champion of a cause, could not be contained within the bounds of ordinary speech. It breaks into ferocious reprobation, into terrific blasts of vituperation, beneath which the very language creaks, as the timbers of a ship in a storm. Corruptio optimi pessima. The archangel is recognizable by the energy of his malice. Were all those accomplishments, those many studious years hiving wisdom, the knowledge of all the tongues, the command of all the thoughts of all the ages, and that wealth of English expression—were all these acquirements only of use, that their possessor might vie in defamation with an Edwards or a Du Moulin?

For it should be noted that these pamphlets, now only serving as a record of the prostitution of genius to political party, were, at the time at which they appeared, of no use to the cause in which they were written. Writers, with a professional tendency to magnify their office, have always been given to exaggerate the effect of printed words. There are examples of thought having been influenced by books. But such books have been scientific, not rhetorical. Milton's pamphlets are not works of speculation, or philosophy, or learning, or solid reasoning on facts. They are inflammatory appeals, addressed to the passions of the hour. He who was meditating the erection of an enduring monument, such as the world would not willingly let die, was content to occupy himself with the most ephemeral of all hackwork. His own polemical writings may be justly described in the words he himself uses of a book by one of his opponents, as calculated "to gain a short, contemptible, and soon-fading reward, not to stir the constancy and solid firmness of any wise man . . . but to catch the worthless approbation of an inconstant, irrational, and image-doting rabble."

It would have been not unnatural that the public school and university man, the admirer of Shakespere and the old romances, the pet of Italian academies, the poet-scholar, himself the author of two Masks, who was nursing his wings for a new flight into the realms of verse, should have sided with the cavaliers against the Puritans, with the party of culture and the humanities against the party which shut up the theatres and despised profane learning. But we have seen that there was another side to Milton's mind. This may be spoken of as his other self, the Puritan self, and regarded as in internal conflict with the poet's self. His twenty years' pamphlet warfare may be presented by his biographer as the expression of the Puritanic Milton, who shall have been driven back upon his suppressed instincts as a poet by the ruin of his political hopes. This chart of Milton's life is at once simple and true. But like all physiological diagrams it falls short of the subtlety and complexity of human character. A study of the pamphlets will show that the poet is all there, indeed only too openly for influence on opinion, and that the blighted hope of the patriot lends a secret pathos to *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes.*

This other element in Milton is not accurately named Puritanism. Even the term republicanism is a coarse and conventional description of that sentiment which dominated his whole being, and which is the inspiration at once of his poetry and of his prose. To give a name to this sentiment, I must call it the love of liberty. It was an aspiration at once real and vague, after a new order of things, an order in which the old injustices and oppressions should cease; after a new Jerusalem, a millennium, a Utopia, an Oceana. Its aim was to realize in political institutions that great instauration of which Bacon dreamed in the world of intelligence. It was much more negative than affirmative, and knew better, as we all do, how good was hindered, than how it should be promoted. "I did but prompt the age to *quit their clogs*." Milton embodied, more perfectly than any of his contemporaries, this spirit of the age. It is the ardent aspiration after the pure and noble life, the aspiration which stamps every line he wrote, verse or prose, with a dignity as of an heroic age. This gives consistency to all his utterances. The doctrinaire republican of to-day cannot understand how the man who approved the execution of the would-be despot Charles Stuart, should have been the hearty supporter of the real autocrat Oliver Cromwell. Milton was not the slave of a name. He cared not for the word republic, so as it was well with the commonwealth. Parliaments or single rulers, he knew, are but means to an end; if that end was obtained, no matter if the constitutional guarantees exist or not. Many of Milton's pamphlets are certainly party pleadings, choleric, one-sided, personal. But through them all runs the one redeeming characteristic—that they are all written on the side of liberty. He defended religious liberty against the prelates, civil liberty against the crown, the liberty of the press against the executive, liberty of conscience against the Presbyterians, and domestic liberty against the tyranny of canon law. Milton's pamphlets might have been stamped with the motto which Selden inscribed (in Greek) in all his books, "Liberty before everything."

One virtue these pamphlets possess, the virtue of style They are monuments of our language so remarkable that Milton's prose works must always be resorted to by students, as long as English remains a medium of ideas. Yet even on the score of style, Milton's prose is subject to serious deductions. His negligence is such as to amount to an absence of construction. He who, in his verse, trained the sentence with delicate sensibility to follow his guiding hand into exquisite syntax, seems in his prose writing to abandon his meaning to shift for itself. Here Milton compares disadvantageously with Hooker. Hooker's elaborate sentence, like the sentence of Demosthenes, is composed of parts so hinged, of clauses so subordinated to the main thought, that we foresee the end from the beginning, and close the period with a sense of perfect roundness and totality. Milton does not seem to have any notion of what a period means. He begins anywhere, and leaves off, not when the sense closes, but when he is out of breath. We might have thought this pell-mell huddle of his words was explained, if not excused, by the exigencies of the party pamphlet, which cannot wait. But the same asyntactic disorder is equally found in the *History of Britain*, which he had in hand for forty years. Nor is it only the Miltonic sentence which is incoherent; the whole arrangement of his topics is equally loose, disjointed, and desultory. His inspiration comes from impulse. Had he stayed to chastise his emotional writing by reason and the laws of logic, he would have deprived himself of the sources of his strength.

These serious faults are balanced by virtues of another kind. Putting Bacon aside, the condensed force and poignant brevity of whose aphoristic wisdom has no parallel in English, there is no other prosaist who possesses anything like Milton's command over the resources of our language. Milton cannot match the musical harmony and exactly balanced periods of his predecessor Hooker. He is without the power of varied illustration, and accumulation of ornamental circumstance, possessed by his contemporary, Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667). But neither of these great writers impressses the reader with a sense of unlimited power such as we feel to reside in Milton. Vast as is the wealth of magnificent words which he flings with both hands carelessly upon the page, we feel that there is still much more in reserve.

The critics have observed (Collier's *Poetical Decameron*) that as Milton advanced in life he gradually disused the compound words he had been in the habit of making for himself. However this may be, his words are the words of one who made a study of the language, as a poet studies language, searching its capacities for the expression of surging emotion. Jeremy Taylor's prose is poetical prose. Milton's prose is not poetical prose, but a different thing, the prose of a poet; not like Taylor's, loaded with imagery on the outside; but colored by imagination from within. Milton is the first English writer who, possessing in the ancient models a standard of the effect which could be produced by choice of words, set himself to the conscious study of our native tongue with a firm faith in its as yet undeveloped powers as an instrument of thought.

The words in Milton's poems have been counted, and it appears that he employs 8000, while Shakespere's plays and poems yield about 15,000. From this it might be inferred that the Miltonic vocabulary is only half as rich as that of Shakespere. But no inference can be founded upon the absolute number of words used by any writer. We must know, not the total of different words, but the *proportion* of different words to the whole of any writer's words. Now to furnish a list of 100 different words the English Bible requires 531 common words, Shakespere 164, Milton 135 only. This computation is founded on the poems; it would be curious to have the same test tried upon the prose writings, though no such test can be as trustworthy as the educated ear of a listener to a continued reading.

It is no part of a succinct biography, such as the present, to furnish an account in detail of the various controversies of the time, as Milton engaged in them. The reader will doubtless be content with the bare indication of the subjects on which he wrote. The whole number of Milton's political pamphlets is twenty-five. Of these, twenty-one are written in English, and four in Latin. Of the *Tractate of Education* and the four divorce pamphlets something has been already said. Of the remaining twenty, nine, or nearly half, relate to church government, or ecclesiastical affairs; eight treat of the various crises of the civil strife; and two are personal vindications of himself against one of his antagonists. There remains one tract of which the subject is of a more general and permanent nature, the best known of all the series, *Areopagitica : A Speech for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing, to the*

Parliament of England. The whole series of twenty-five extends over a period of somewhat less than twenty years; the earliest, viz., *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England, and the causes that hitherto have hindered it*, having been published in 1641; the latest, entitled, *A ready and easy way to establish a free Commonwealth*, coming out in March, 1660, after the torrent of royalism had set in, which was to sweep away the men and the cause to which Milton had devoted himself. Milton's pen thus accompanied the whole of the Puritan revolution from the modest constitutional opposition in which it commenced, through its unexpected triumph, to its crushing overthrow by the royalist and clerical reaction.

The autumn of 1641 brought with it a sensible lull in the storm of revolutionary passion. Indeed, there began to appear all the symptoms of a reaction, and of the formation of a solid conservative party, likely to be strong enough to check, or even to suppress, the movement. The impulse seemed to have spent itself, and a desire for rest from political agitation began to steal over the nation. Autumn and the harvest turn men's thoughts towards country occupations and sports. The King went off to Scotland in August; the Houses adjourned till the 20th October. The Scottish army was paid off, and had repassed the border; the Scottish commissioners and preachers had left London.

It was a critical moment for the Puritan party. Some very considerable triumphs they had gained. The arch-enemy Strafford had been brought to the block; Laud was in the Tower; the leading members of Convocation, bishops, deans, and archdeacons, had been heavily fined; the Star Chamber and the High Commission Court had been abolished; the Stannary and Forestal jurisdictions restrained. But the Puritan movement aimed at far more than this. It was not only that the root-and-branch men were pushing for a generally more levelling policy, but the whole Puritan party were committed to a struggle with the hierarchy of the Established Church. It was not so much that they demanded more and more reform, with the growing appetite of revolution, but that as long as bishops existed, nothing that had been wrested from them was secure. The Puritans could not exist in safety side by side with a church whose principle was that there was no church without the apostolic succession. The abolition of episcopacy and the substitution of the Presbyterian platform was, so it then seemed, a bare measure of necessary precaution, and not the urgency of dissatisfied spirits. Add to this that it was well understood by those who were near enough to the principal actors in the drama, that the concessions which had been made by the Court had been easily made, because they could be taken back, when the time should come, with equal ease. Even the most moderate men, who were satisfied with the amout of reform already obtained, must have trembled at its insecurity. The Puritan leaders must have viewed with dismay the tendency in the nation towards a reaction in favor of things as they were.

It was upon this condition of the public mind that Milton persistently poured pamphlet after pamphlet, successive vials of apocalyptic wrath. He exhausts all the resources of rhetoric, and plays upon every note in the gamut of public feeling, that he may rouse the apathetic, confirm the wavering, dumfound the malignant; where there was zeal, to fan it into flame; where there was opposition, to cow and browbeat it by indignant scorn and terrific denunciation. The first of these manifestoes was (1) *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline*, of which I have already spoken. This was immediately followed by (2) *Of Prelaticall Episcopacy*. This tract was a reply, in form, to a publication of Archbishop Usher. It was about the end of May, 1641, that Usher had come forward on the breach with his *Judgment of Dr. Rainolds touching the Original of Episcopacy*. Rainolds, who had been President of Corpus (1598–1607), had belonged to the Puritan party in his day, had refused a bishopric, and was known, like Usher himself, to be little favorable to the exclusive claims of the high prelatists. He was thus an unexceptionable witness to adduce in favor of the apostolic origin of the distinction between bishop and presbyter. Usher, in editing Rainolds' opinions, had backed them up with all the additional citations which his vast reading could supply.

Milton could not speak with the weight that attached to Usher, the most learned Churchman of the age, who had spent eighteen years in going through a complete course of fathers and councils. But, in the first paragraph of his answer, Milton adroitly puts the controversy upon a footing by which antiquarian research is put out of court. Episcopacy is either of human or divine origin. If of human origin, it may be either retained or abolished, as may be found expedient. If of divine appointment, it must be proved to be so out of Scripture. If this cannot be proved out of inspired Scripture, no accumulation of merely human assertion of the point can be of the least authority. Having thus shut out antiquity as evidence in the case, he proceeds nevertheless to examine his opponent's authorities, and sets them aside by a style of argument which has more of banter than of criticism.

One incident of this collision between Milton, young and unknown, and the venerable prelate, whom he was assaulting with the rude wantonness of untempered youth, deserves to be mentioned here. Usher had incautiously included the Ignatian epistles among his authorities. This laid the most learned man of the day at the mercy of an adversary of less reading than himself. Milton, who at least knew so much suspicion of the genuineness of these remains as Casaubon's *Exercitations on Baronius* and Vedelin's edition (Geneva, 1623) could tell him, pounced upon this critical flaw, and delightedly denounced in trenchant tones this "Perkin Warbeck of Ignatius," and the "supposititious offspring of some dozen epistles." This rude shock it was which set Usher upon a more careful examination of the Ignatian question. The result was his well-known edition of Ignatius, printed 1642, though not published till 1644, in which he acknowledged the total spuriousness of nine epistles, and the partial interpolation of the other six. I have not noticed in Usher's *Prolegomena* that he alludes to Milton's onslaught. Nor, indeed, was he called upon to do so in a scientific investigation, as Milton had brought no contribution to the solution of the question beyond sound and fury.

Of Milton's third pamphlet, entitled (3) *Animadversions on the Remonstrants' defence against Smectymnuus*, it need only be said that it is a violent personal onfall upon Joseph Hall, bishop, first, of Exeter and afterwards of Norwich. The bishop, by descending into the arena of controversy, had deprived himself of the privilege which his literary eminence should have secured to him. But nothing can excuse or reconcile us to the undecent scurrility with which he is assailed in Milton's pages, which reflect more discredit on him who wrote them, than on him against whom they are written.

The fifth pamphlet, called (5) *An Apology against a Pamphlet called "A Modest Confutation, &c."* (1642), is chiefly remarkable for a defence of his own Cambridge career. A man who throws dirt, as Milton did, must not be surprised if some of it comes back to him. A son of Bishop Hall, coming forward as his father's champion and avenger, had raked up a garbled version of Milton's quarrel with his tutor Chappell and by a further distortion had brought it out in the shape that, "after an inordinate and violent youth spent at the university," Milton had been "vomited out thence." From the university this "alchemist of slander" follows him to the city, and declares that where Milton's morning haunts are, he wisses not, but that his afternoons are spent in playhouses and bordelloes. Milton replies to these random charges by a lengthy account of himself and his studious habits. As the reader may expect a specimen of Milton's prose style, I quote a part of this autobiographical paragraph :—

> "I had my time, as others have who have good learning bestowed upon them, to be sent to those places where the opinion was it might be sooner attained ; and, as the manner is, was not unstudied in those authors which are most commended, whereof some were grave orators and historians, whom methought I loved indeed, but as my age then was, so I understood them ; others were the smooth elegiac poets, whereof the schools are not scarce ; whom both for the pleasing sound of their numerous writing, which in imitation I found most easy, and most agreeable to nature's part in me, and for their matter, which what it is there be few who know not, I was so allowed to read, that no recreation came to me better welcome. . . . . Whence having observed them to account it the chief glory of their wit, in that they were ablest to judge, to praise, and by that could esteem themselves worthiest to love those high perfections which under one or other name they took to celebrate, I thought with myself by every instinct and presage of nature which is not wont to be false, that what emboldened them to this task might with such diligence as they used embolden me, and that what judgment, wit, or elegance was my share, would herein best appear and best value itself by how much more wisely and with more love of virtue I should choose (let rude ears be absent) the object of not unlike praises. . . . . Nor blame it in those years to propose to themselves such

> a reward as the noblest dispositions above other things in this life have sometimes preferred. Whereof not to be sensible when good and fair in one person meet, argues both a gross and shallow judgment, and withal an ungentle and swainish breast. For by the firm settling of these persuasions I became so much a proficient, that if I found those authors anywhere speaking unworthy things of themselves, or unchaste of those names which before they had extolled, this effect it wrought with me, from that time forward their art I still applauded, but the men I deplored; and above them all preferred the two famous renowners of Beatrice and Laura, who never write but honour of them to whom they devote their verse, displaying sublime and pure thoughts without transgression. And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he, who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things, not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy.
>
> "These reasonings together with a certain niceness of nature, an honest haughtiness and self-esteem, either of what I was or what I might be, which let envy call pride, and lastly that modesty, whereof, though not in the title-page, yet here, I may be excused to make some beseeming profession, all these uniting the supply of their natural aid together, kept me still above those low descents of mind, beneath which he must deject and plunge himself, that can agree to saleable and unlawful prostitutions.
>
> "Next, for hear me out now, readers, that I may tell ye whither my younger feet wandered, I betook me among those lofty fables and romances which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knighthood founded by our victorious kings, and from hence had in renown over all Christendom. There I read it in the oath of every knight, that he should defend to the expence of his best blood, or of his life if it so befel him, the honour and chastity of virgin or matron. From whence even then I learnt what a noble virtue chastity ever must be, to the defence of which so many worthies by such a dear adventure of themselves had sworn. And if I found in the story afterwards any of them by word or deed breaking that oath, I judged it the same fault of the poet as that which is attributed to Homer to have written undecent things of the gods. Only this my mind gave me, that every free and gentle spirit without that oath ought to be borne a knight, nor needed to expect the gilt spur, or the laying of a sword upon his shoulder, to stir him up both by his counsel and his arm to serve and protect the weakness of any attempted chastity. So that even those books which to many others have been the fuel of wantonness and loose living, I cannot think how unless by divine indulgence, proved to me so many incitements to the love and steadfast observation of virtue."

This is one of the autobiographical oases in these pamphlets, which are otherwise arid deserts of sand, scorched by the fire of extinct passion. It may be asked why it is that a few men, Gibbon or Milton, are indulged without challenge in talk about themselves, which would be childish vanity or odious egotism in others. When a Frenchman writes, "Nous avons tous, nous autres Français, des séduisantes qualités" (Gaffarel), he is ridiculous. The difference is not merely that we tolerate in a man of confessed superiority what would be intolerable in an equal. This is true; but there is a further distinction of moral quality in men's confessions. In Milton, as in Gibbon, the gratification of self-love, which attends all autobiography, is felt to be subordinated to a nobler intention. The lofty conception which Milton formed of his vocation as a poet, expands his soul and absorbs his personality. It is his office, and not himself, which he magnifies. The details of his life and nurture are important, not because they belong to him, but because he belongs, by dedication, to a high and sacred calling. He is extremely jealous, not of his own reputation, but of the credit which is due to lofty endeavor. We have only to compare Milton's magnanimous assumption of the first place with the paltry conceit with which, in the following age of Dryden and Pope, men spoke of themselves as authors, to see the wide difference between the professional vanity of successful authorship and the proud consciousness of a prophetic mission. Milton leads a dedicated life, and has laid down for himself the law that "he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem."

If Milton had not been the author of *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost*, his political pamphlets would have been as forgotten as are the thousand civil war tracts preserved in the Thomason collection in the Museum, or have served, at most, as philological landmarks. One, however, of his prose tracts has continued to enjoy some degree of credit down to the present time, for its matter as well as for its words, *Areopagitica.* This tract belongs to the year 1644, the most fertile year in Milton's life, as in it he brought out two of his divorce tracts, the *Tractate of Education* and the *Areopagitica.* As Milton's moving principle was not any preconceived system of doctrine, but the passion for liberty in general, it was natural that he should plead, when occasion called, for liberty of the press, among others. The occasion was one personal to himself.

It is well known that, early in the history of printing, governments became jealous of this new instrument for influencing opinion. In England, in 1556, under Mary, the Stationers' Company was invested with legal privileges, having the twofold object of protecting the book trade and controlling writers. All publications were required to be registered in the register of the company. No persons could set up a press without a license, or print anything which had not been previously approved by some official censor. The court which had come to be known as the court of Star Chamber exercised criminal jurisdiction over offenders, and even issued its own decrees for the regulation of printing. The arbitrary action of this court had no small share in bringing about the resistance to Charles I. But the fall of the royal authority did not mean the emancipation of the press. The Parliament had no intention of letting go the control which the monarchy had exercised; the incidence of the coercion was to be shifted from themselves upon their opponents. The Star Chamber was abolished, but its powers of search and seizure were transferred to the Company of Stationers. Licensing was to go on as before, but to be exercised by special commissioners, instead of by the Archbishop and the Bishop of London. Only whereas, before, contraband had consisted of Presbyterian books, henceforwarded it was Catholic and Anglican books which would be suppressed.

Such was not Milton's idea of the liberty of thought and speech in a free commonwealth. He had himself written for the Presbyterians four unlicensed pamphlets. It was now open to him to write any number, and to get them licensed, provided they were written on the same side. This was not liberty, as he had learned it in his classics, "ubi sentire quæ velis, et quæ sentias dicere licet." Over and above this encroachment on the liberty of the free citizen, it so happened that at this moment Milton himself was concerned to ventilate an opinion which was not Presbyterian, and had no chance of passing a Presbyterian licenser. His *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* was just ready for press when the ordinance of 1643 came into operation. He published it without license and without printer's name, in defiance of the law, and awaited the consequences. There were no consequences. He repeated the offence in a second edition in February, 1644, putting his name now (the first edition had been anonymous), and dedicating it to the very Parliament whose ordinance he was setting at nought. This time the Commons, stirred up by a petition from the Company of Stationers, referred the matter to the committee of printing. It went no further. Either it was deemed inexpedient to molest so sound a Parliamentarian as Milton, or Cromwell's "accommodation resolution" of September 13, 1644, opened the eyes of the Presbyterian zealots to the existence in the kingdom of a new, and much wider, phase of opinion, which ominously threatened the compact little edifice of Presbyterian truth that they had been erecting with a profound conviction of its exclusive orthodoxy.

The occurrence had been sufficient to give a new direction to Milton's thoughts. Regardless of the fact that his plea for liberty in marriage had fallen upon deaf ears, he would plead for liberty of speech. The *Areopagitica, for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing*, came out in November, 1644, an unlicensed, unregistered publication, without printer's or bookseller's name. It was cast in the form of a speech addressed to the Parliament. The motto was taken from Euripides, and printed in the original Greek, which was not, when addressed to the Parliament of 1644, the absurdity which it would be now. The title is less appropriate, being borrowed from the *Areopagitic Discourse* of Isocrates, between which and Milton's *Speech* there is no resemblance either in subject or style. All that the two productions have in common is their form. They are both unspoken orations, written to the address of a representative assembly—to the Boulé or Senate of Athens, and to the Parliament of England.

Milton's *Speech* is in his own best style; a copious flood of majestic eloquence, the outpouring of a noble soul with a divine scorn of narrow dogma and paltry aims. But it is a mere pamphlet, extemporized in, at most, a month or two, without research or special knowledge, with no attempt to ascertain general principles, and more than Milton's usual disregard of method. A jurist's question is here handled by a rhetorician. He has preached a noble and heart-stirring sermon on his text, but the problem for the legislator remains where it was. The vagueness and confusion of the thoughts finds a vehicle in language which is too often overcrowded and obscure. I think the *Areopagitica* has few or no offences against taste; on the other hand, it has few or none of those grand passages which redeem the scurrility of his political pamphlets. The passage in which Milton's visit to Galileo "grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition," is mentioned, is often quoted for its biographical interest; and the terse dictum, "as good almost kill a man as kill a good book," has passed into a current axiom. A paragraph at the close, where he hints that the time may be come to suppress the suppressors, intimates, but so obscurely as to be likely to escape notice, that Milton had already made up his mind that a struggle with the Presbyterian party was to be the sequel of the overthrow of the Royalists. He has not yet arrived at the point he will hereafter reach, of rejecting the very idea of a minister of religion, but he is already aggrieved by the implicit faith which the Puritan laity, who had cast out bishops, were beginning to bestow upon their pastor—"a factor to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs." Finally, it must be noted that Milton, though he had come to see round Presbyterianism, had not, in 1644, shaken off all dogmatic profession. His toleration of opinion was far from complete. He would call in the intervention of the executioner in the case of "mischievous and libellous books," and could not bring himself to contemplate the toleration of Popery and open superstition, "which as it extirpates all religious and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpate; provided first that all charitable and compassionate means be used to win and gain the weak and misled."

The *Areopagitica*, as might be expected, produced no effect upon the legislation of the Long Parliament, of whom (says Hallam) "very few acts of political wisdom or courage are recorded." Individual licensers became more lax in the performance of the duty, but this is reasonably to be ascribed to the growing spirit of independency—a spirit which was incompatible with any embargo on the utterance of private opinion. A curious epilogue to the history of this publication is the fact, first brought to light by Mr. Masson, that the author of the *Areopagitica*, at a later time, acted himself in the capacity of licenser. It was in 1651, under the Commonwealth, Marchmont Needham being editor of the weekly paper called *Mercurius Politicus*, that Milton was associated with him as his censor or supervising editor. Mr. Masson conjectures, with some probability, that the leading articles of the *Mercurius*, during part of the year 1651, received touches from Milton's hand. But this was, after all, rather in the character of editor, whose business it is to see that nothing improper goes into the paper, than in that of press licenser in the sense in which the *Areopagitica* had denounced it.

CHAPTER VII.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

In September, 1645, Milton left the garden-house in Aldersgate for a larger house in Barbican, in the same neighborhood, but a little further from the city gate, *i.e.* more in the country. The larger house was, perhaps, required for the accommodation of his pupils but it served to shelter his wife's family, when they were thrown upon the world by the surrender of Oxford in June, 1646. In this Barbican house Mr. Powell died at the end of that year. Milton had been promised with his wife a portion of 1000*l.*; but Mr. Powell's affairs had long been in a very embarrassed condition, and now by the consequences of delinquency that condition had become one of absolute ruin. Great pains have been bestowed by Mr. Masson in unravelling the entanglement of the Powell accounts. The data which remain are ample, and we cannot but feel astonished at the accuracy with which our national records, in more important matters so defective, enable us to set out a debtor and creditor balance of the estate of a private citizen who died more than 200 years ago. But the circumstances are peculiarly intricate, and we are still unable to reconcile Mr. Powell's will with the composition records, both of which are extant. As a compounding delinquent, his fine, assessed at the customary rate of two years' income, was fixed by the commissioners at 180*l.* The commissioners must have, therefore, been satisfied that his income did not exceed 90*l.* a year. Yet by his will of date December 30, 1646, he leaves his estate of Forest Hill, the annual value of which alone far exceeded 90*l.*, to his eldest son. This property is not mentioned in the inventory of his estate, real and personal, laid before the commissioners, sworn to by the delinquent, and by them accepted. The possible explanation is that the Forest Hill property had really passed into the possession, by foreclosure, of the mortgagee, Sir Robert Pye, who sat for Woodstock in the Long Parliament, but that Mr. Powell, making his will on his death-bed, pleased himself with the fancy of leaving his son and heir an estate which was no longer his to dispose of. Putting Forest Hill out of the account, it would appear that the sequestrators had dealt somewhat harshly with Mr. Powell; for they had included in their estimate one doubtful asset of 500*l.*, and one non-existent of 400*l.* This last item was a stock of timber stated to be at Forest Hill, but which had really been appropriated without payment by the Parliamentarians, and part of it voted by Parliament itself towards repair of the church in the stanch Puritan town of Banbury.

The upshot of the whole transaction is that, in satisfaction of his claim of 1500*l.* (1000*l.* his wife's dower, 500*l.* an old loan of 1627,) Milton came into possession of some property at Wheatley. This property, consisting of the tithes of Wheatley, certain cottages, and three and a half yards of land, had in the time of the disturbances produced only 40*l.* a year. But as the value of all property improved when the civil war came to an end, Milton found the whole could now be let for 80*l.* But then out of this he had to pay Mr Powell's composition, reduced to 130*l.* on Milton's petition, and the widow's jointure, computed at 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* per annum. What of income remained after these disbursements he might apply towards repaying himself the old loan of 1627. This was all Milton ever saw of the 1000*l.* which Mr. Powell, with the high-flying magnificence of a cavalier who knew he was ruined, had promised as his daughter's portion.

Mr. Powell's death was followed in less than three months by that of John Milton, senior. He died in the house in Barbican, and the entry, "John Milton, gentleman, 15 (March)," among the burials in March, 1646, is still to be seen in the register of the parish of St. Giles's, Cripplegate. A host of eminent men have traced the first impulse of their genius to their mother. Milton always acknowledged with just gratitude that it was to his father's discerning taste and fostering care that he owed the encouragement of his studies, and the leisure which rendered them possible. He has registered this gratitude in both prose and verse. The Latin hexameters, "Ad patrem," written at Horton, are inspired by a feeling far beyond commonplace filial piety, and a warmth which is rare indeed in neo-Latin versification. And when, in his prose pamphlets, he has occasion to speak of himself, he does not omit the acknowledgment of "the ceaseless diligence and care of my father, whom God recompense." (*Reason of Church Government.*)

After the death of his father, being now more at ease in his circumstances, he gave up taking pupils, and quitted the large house in Barbican for a smaller in High Holborn, opening backwards into Lincoln's Inn Fields. This removal was about Michaelmas, 1647.

During this period, 1639–1649, while his interests were engaged by the all-absorbing events of the civil strife, he wrote no poetry, or none deserving the name. All artists have intervals of non-productiveness, usually caused by exhaustion. This was not Milton's case. His genius was not his master, nor could it pass, like that of Leonardo da Vinci, unmoved through the most tragic scenes. He deliberately suspended it at the call of what he believed to be duty to his country. His unrivalled power of expression was placed at the service of a passionate political conviction. This prostitution of faculty avenged itself; for when he did turn to poetry, his strength was gone from him. The period is chiefly marked by sonnets, not many, one in a year, or thereabouts. That *On the religious memory of Mrs. Catherine Thomson*, in 1646, is the lowest point touched by Milton in poetry, for his metrical psalms do not deserve the name.

The sonnet, or Elegy on Mrs. Catherine Thomson in the form of a sonnet, though in poetical merit not distinguishable from the average religious verse of the Caroline age, has an interest for the biographer. It breathes a holy calm that is in sharp contrast with the angry virulence of the pamphlets which were being written at this very time by the same pen. Amid his intemperate denunciations of his political and ecclesiastical foes, it seems that Milton did not inwardly forfeit the peace which passeth all understanding. He had formerly said himself (*Doctrine and Disc.*), "nothing more than disturbance of mind suspends us from approaching to God." Now, out of all the clamor and the bitterness of the battle of the sects, he can retire and be alone with his heavenly aspirations, which have lost none of their ardor by having laid aside all their sectarianism. His genius has forsaken him, but his soul still glows with the fervor of devotion.

The sonnet (xv.) *On the Lord-General Fairfax, at the siege of Colchester*, written in 1648, is again a manifesto of the writer's political feelings, nobly uttered, and investing party with a patriotic dignity not unworthy of the man, Milton. It is a hortatory lyric, a trumpet-call to his party in the moment of victory to remember the duties which that victory imposed upon them. It is not without the splendid resonance of the Italian canzone. But it can scarcely be called poetry, expressing, as it does, facts directly, and not indirectly through their imaginative equivalents. Fairfax was, doubtless, well worthy that Milton should have commemorated him in a higher strain. Of Fairfax's eminent qualities the sonnet only dwells on two, his personal valor, which had been tried in many fights—he had been three times dangerously wounded in the Yorkshire campaign—and his superiority to sordid interests. Of his generalship, in which he was second to Cromwell only, and of his love of arts and learning, nothing is said, though the last was the passion of his life, for which at forty he renounced ambition. Perhaps in 1648 Milton, who lived a very retired life, did not know of these tastes, and had not heard that it was by Fairfax's care that the Bodleian library was saved from wreck on the surrender of Oxford in 1646. And it was not till later, years after the sonnet was written, that the same Fairfax, "whose name in arms through Europe rings," became a competitor of Milton in the attempt to paraphase the Psalms in metre.

Milton's paraphase of the Psalms belongs to history, but to the history of psalmody, not that of poetry. At St. Paul's School, at fifteen, the boy had turned two psalms, the 114th and the 136th, by way of exercise. That in his day of plenary inspiration, Milton, who disdained Dryden as "a rhymist but no poet," and has recorded his own impatience with the "drawling versifiers," should have undertaken to grind down the noble antistropic lyrics of the Hebrew bard into ballad rhymes for the use of Puritan worship, would have been impossible. But the idea of being useful to his country had acquired exclusive possession of his mind. Even his faculty of verse should be employed in the good cause. If Parliament had set him the task, doubtless he would have willingly undertaken it, as Corneille, in the blindness of Catholic obedience, versified the *Imitatio Christi* at the command of the Jesuits. Milton was not officially employed, but voluntarily took up the work. The Puritans were bent upon substituting a new version of the Davidic Psalms for that of Sternhold and Hopkins, for no other reason than that the latter formed part of the hated Book of Common Prayer. The Commons had pronounced in favor of a version by one of their own members, the stanch Puritan M. P. for Truro, Francis Rouse. The Lords favored a rival book, and numerous other claimants were before the public. Dissatified with any of these attempts, Milton would essay himself. In 1648 he turned nine psalms, and recurring to the task in 1653, "did into verse" eight more. He thought these specimens worth preserving and annexing to the volume of his poems which he published himself in 1673. As this doggerel continues to encumber each succeeding edition of the *Poetical Works*, it is as well that Milton did not persevere with his experiment and produce a complete Psalter. He prudently abandoned a task in which success is impossible. A metrical psalm, being a compromise between the psalm and the hymn, like other compromises, misses, rather than combines, the distinctive excellences of the things united. That Milton should ever have attempted what poetry forbids, is only another proof how entirely at this period more absorbing motives had possession of his mind and overbore his poetical judgment. It is a coincidence worth remembering that Milton's contemporary, Lord Clarendon, was at this very time solacing his exile at Madrid by composing, not a version, but a commentary upon the Psalms, "applying those devotions to the troubles of this time."

Yet all the while that he was thus unfaithful in practice to his art, it was poetry that possessed his real affections, and the reputation of a poet which formed his ambition. It was a temporary separation and not a divorce which he designed. In each successive pamphlet he reiterates his undertaking to redeem his pledge of a great work, as soon as liberty shall be consolidated in the realm. Meanwhile, as an earnest of what should be hereafter, he permitted the publication of a collection of his early poems.

This little volume of some 200 pages, rude in execution as it is, ranks among the highest prizes of the book collector, very few copies being extant, and those mostly in public libraries. It appeared in 1645, and owed its appearance, not to the vanity of the author, but to the zeal of a publisher. Humphrey Moseley, at the sign of the Prince's Arms, in St. Paul's Churchyard, suggested the collection to Milton, and undertook the risk of it, though knowing, as he says in the prefixed address of The Stationer to the Reader, that "the slightest pamphlet is nowadays more vendible than the works of learnedest men." It may create some surprise that, in 1645, there should have been any public in England for a volume of verse. Naseby had been fought in June, Philiphaugh in September, Fairfax and Cromwell were continuing their victorious career in the west, and the King was reduced to the single stonghold of Oxford. It was clear that the conflict was decided in favor of the Parliament, but men's minds must have been strung to a pitch of intense expectation as to what kind of settlement was to come. Yet, at the very crisis of the civil strife we find a London publisher able to bring out the Poems of Waller (1644), and sufficiently encouraged by their reception to follow them up, in the next year, with the Poems of Mr. John Milton. Are we warranted in inferring that a finer public was beginning to loathe the dreary theological polemic of which it had had a surfeit, and turned to a book of poetry as that which was most unlike the daily garbage, just as a later public absorbed five thousand copies of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* in the year of Austerlitz? One would like to know who were the purchasers of Milton and Waller, when the cavalier families were being ruined by confiscations and compositions, and Puritan families would turn with pious horror from the very name of a Mask,

Milton was himself editor of his own volume, and prefixed to it, again out of Virgil's Eclogues, the characteristic motto, "Baccare frontem Cingite, ne vati noceat mala lingua *futuro*," indicating that his poetry was all to come.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LATIN SECRETARYSHIP.

THE Crown having fallen on January 30, 1649, and the House of Lords by the vote of February 6 following, the sovereign power in England was for the moment in the hands of that fragment of the Long Parliament which remained after the various purges and expulsions to which it had been subjected. Some of the excluded members were allowed to return, and by occasional new elections in safe boroughs the number of members was raised to one hundred and fifty, securing an average attendance of about seventy. The future government of the nation was declared to be by way of a republic, and the writs ran in the name of the Keepers of the Liberty of England, by authority of Parliament. But the real centre of power was the Council of State, a body of forty-one members, nominated for a period of twelve months, according to a plan of constitution devised by the army leaders. In the hands of this republican Council was concentrated a combination of power such as had never been wielded by any English monarch. But though its attribution of authority was great, its exercise of the powers lodged with it was hampered by differences among its members, and the disaffection of various interests and parties. The Council of State contained most of the notable statesmen of the Parliamentary party, and had before it a vast task in reorganizing the administration of England, in the conduct of an actual war in Ireland, a possible war in Scotland, and in the maintenance of the honor of the republic in its relations with foreign princes.

The Council of State prepared the business for its consideration through special committees for special departments of the public service. The Committee for Foreign Affairs consisted of Whitelocke, Vane, Lord Lisle, Lord Denbigh, Mr. Marten, Mr. Lisle. A secretary was required to translate despatches, both those which were sent out and those which were received. Nothing seems more natural than that the author of the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, who was at once a stanch Parliamentarian, an accomplished Latin scholar, and conversant with more than one of the spoken languages of the Continent, should be thought of for the office. Yet so little was Milton personally known, living as he did the life of a retired student, that it was the accident of his having the acquaintance of one of the new Council to which he owed the appointment.

The post was offered him, but would he accept it? He had never ceased to revolve in his mind subjects capable of political treatment, and to cherish his own vocation as the classical poet of the English language. Peace had come, and leisure was within his reach. He was poor, but his wants were simple, and he had enough wherewith to meet them. Already in 1649 unmistakable symptoms threatened his sight, and warned him of the necessity of the most rigid economy in the use of his eyes. The duties that he was now asked to undertake were indefinite already in amount, and would doubtless extend themselves if zealously discharged.

But the temptation was strong, and he did not resist it. The increase of income was, doubtless, to Milton the smallest among the inducements now offered him. He had thought it a sufficient and an honorable employment to serve his country with his pen as a volunteer. Here was an offer to become her official, authorized servant, and to bear a part, though a humble part, in the great work of reorganization which was now to be attempted. Above all other allurements to a retired student, unversed in men, and ready to idealize character, was the opportunity of becoming at once personally acquainted with all the great men of the patriotic party, whom his ardent imagination had invested with heroic qualities. The very names of Fairfax, Vane, and Cromwell called up in him emotions for which prose was an inadequate vehicle. Nor was it only that in the Council itsetf he would be in daily intercourse with such men as Henry Marten, Hutchinson, Whitelocke, Harrington, St. John, Ludlow, but his position would introduce him at once to all the members of the House who were worth knowing. It was not merely a new world; it was *the* world which was here opened for the first time to

Milton. And we must remember that all scholar as he was, Milton was well convinced of the truth that there are other sources of knowledge besides books. He had himself spent "many studious and contemplative years in the search of religious and civil knowledge," yet he knew that, for a mind large enough to "take in a general survey of humane things," it was necessary to know—

"The world, ... her glory,
Empires and monarchs, and their radiant courts,
Best school of best experience."

He had repeatedly, as if excusing his political interludes, renewed his pledge to devote all his powers to poetry as soon as they should be fully ripe. To complete his education as a poet, he wanted initiation into affairs. Here was an opening far beyond any he had ever dreamed of. The sacrifice of time and precious eyesight which he was to make was costly, but it was not pure waste; it would be partly returned to him in a ripened experience in this

"Insight
In all things that to greatest actions lead."

He accepted the post at once without hesitation. On March 13, 1649, the Committee for Foreign Affairs was directed to make the offer to him; on March 15 he attended at Whitehall to be admitted to office. Well would it have been both for his genius and his fame if he had declined it. His genius might have reverted to its proper course, while he was in the flower of age, with eyesight still available, and a spirit exalted by the triumph of the good cause. His fame would have been saved from the degrading incidents of the contention with Salmasius and Morus, and from being tarnished by the obloquy of the faction which he fought, and which conquered him. No man can with impunity insult and trample upon his fellow-man, even in the best of causes. Especially if he be an artist, he makes it impossible to obtain equitable appreciation of his work.

So far as Milton reckoned upon a gain in experience from his secretaryship, he doubtless reaped it. Such a probation could not be passed without solidifying the judgment and correcting its tendency to error. And this school of affairs, which is indispensable for the historian, may also be available for the poet. Yet it would be difficult to point in Milton's subsequent poetry to any element which the poet can be thought to have imbibed from the foreign secretary. Where, in Milton's two epics and *Samson Agonistes*, the personages are all supernatural or heroic, there is no room for the employment or knowledge of the world. Had Milton written comedy, like Molière, he might have said with Molière after he had been introduced at court, "Je n'ai plus que faire d'étudier Plaute et Terence; je n'ai qu'à étudier le monde."

The office into which Milton was now inducted is called in the Council books that of Secretary for foreign tongues. Its duties were chiefly the translation of despatches from and to foreign governments. The degree of estimation in which the Latin secretary was held may be measured by the amount of salary assigned him. For while the English chief Secretary had a salary of 730*l.* (=2200*l.* of our day), the Latin Secretary was paid only 288*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.* (=900*l.*). For this, not very liberal pay, he was told that all his time was to be at the disposal of the government. Lincoln's Inn Fields was too far off for a servant of the Council who might have to attend meetings at seven in the morning. He accordingly migrated to Charing Cross, now become again Charing without the cross, this work of art having been an early (1647) victim of religious barbarism. In November he was accommodated with chambers in Whitehall. But from these he was soon ousted by claimants more considerable or more importunate, and in 1651 he removed to "a pretty garden-house" in Petty France, in Westminster, next door to the Lord Scudamore's, and opening into St. James's Park. The house was extant till 1877, when it disappeared, the last of Milton's many London residences. It had long ceased to look into St. James's Park, more than one row of houses, encroachments upon the public park, having grown up between. The garden-house had become a mere ordinary street house in York Street, only distinguished from the squalid houses on sither side of it by a tablet affixed by Bentham, inscribed "sacred to Milton, prince of poets." Petty France lost its designation in the French Revolution, in obedience to childish petulance which obliterates the name of any one who may displease you at the moment, and became one of the seventeen York Streets of the metropolis. Soon after the re-baptism of the street, Milton's house was occupied by William Hazlitt, who rented it of Bentham. Milton had lived in it for nine years, from 1651 till a few weeks before the Restoration. Its nearness to Whitehall, where the Council sat, was less a convenience than a necessity.

For Milton's life now became one of close attention and busy service. As Latin secretary and Weckherlin's successor, indeed, his proper duties were only those of a clerk or translator. But his aptitude for business of a literary kind soon drew on him a great variety of employment. The demand for a Latin translation of a despatch was not one of frequent occurrence. The Letters of the Parliament, and of Oliver and Richard, Protectors, which are, intrusively, printed among Milton's works, are but one hundred and thirty-seven in all. This number is spread over ten years, being at the rate of about 14 per year; most of them are very short. For the purpose of a biography of Milton, it is sufficient to observe that the dignified attitude which the Commonwealth took up towards foreign powers lost none of its elevation in being conveyed in Miltonic Latin. Whether satisfaction for the murder of an envoy is to be extorted from the arrogant court of Madrid, or an apology is to be offered to a humble count of Oldenburg for delay in issuing a salvaguardia which had been promised, the same equable dignity of expression is maintained, equally remote from crouching before the strong and hectoring the weak.

His translations were not all the duties of the new secretary. He must often serve as interpreter at audiences of foreign envoys. He must superintend the semi-official organ, the *Mercurious Politicus.* He must answer the manifesto of the Presbyterians of Ireland. The *Observations* on the peace of Kilkenny are Milton's composition, but from instructions. By the peace the Irish had obtained home rule in its widest extent, release from the oath of supremacy, and the right to tie their ploughs to the tail of the horse. The same peace also conceded to them the militia, a trust which Charles I, had said he would not devolve on the Parliament of England, "not for an hour!" Milton is indignant that these indulgences, which had been refused to their obedience, should have been extorted by their rebellion and the massacre of "200,000 Protestants." This is an exaggeration of a butchery sufficiently tragic in its real proportions, and in a later tract (*Eikonoklastes*) he reduces it to 154,000. Though the savage Irish are barbarians, uncivilized and uncivilizable, the *Observations* distinctly affirm the new principle of toleration. Though popery be a superstition, the death of all true religion, still conscience is not within the cognizance of the magistrate. The civil sword is to be employed against civil offences only. In adding that the one exception to this toleration is atheism, Milton is careful to state this limitation as the toleration professed by Parliament, and not as his private opinion.

So well satisfied were the Council with their secretary's *Observations* on the peace of Kilkenny, that they next imposed upon him a far more important labor, a reply to the *Eikon Basiliké.* The execution of Charles I. was not an act of vengeance, but a measure of public safety. If, as Hallam affirms, there mingled in the motives of the managers any strain of personal ill-will, this was merged in the imperious necessity of securing themselves from this vengeance, and what they had gained from being taken back. They were alarmed by the reaction which had set in, and had no choice but to strengthen themselves by a daring policy. But the first effect of the removal of the King by violence was to give a powerful stimulus to the reaction already in progress. The groan which burst from the spectators before Whitehall on January 29, 1649, was only representative of the thrill of horror which ran through England and Scotland in the next ten days. This reactionary feeling found expression in a book entitled "*Eikon Basiliké*, the portraiture of his sacred majesty in his solitude and sufferings." The book was composed by Dr. Gauden, but professed to be an authentic copy of papers written by the King. It is possible that Gauden may have had in his hands some written scraps of the King's meditations. If he had such, he only used them as hints to work upon. Gauden was a churchman whom his friends might call liberal and his enemies time-serving. He was a churchman of the stamp of Archbishop Williams, and preferred bishops and the Common-prayer to presbyters and extempore sermons, but did not think the difference between the two of the essence of religion. In better times Gauden would have passed for broad, though his latitudinarianism was more the result of love of ease than of philosophy. Though a royalist, he sat in the Westminster Assembly, and took the covenant, for which compliance he nearly lost the reward which, after the Restoration, became his due. Like the university-bred men of his day, Gauden was not a man of ideas, but of style. In the present instance the idea was supplied by events. The saint and martyr, the man of sorrows, praying for his murderers, the King who renounced an earthly kingdom to gain a heavenly, and who in return for his benefits received from an unthankful people a crown of thorns—this was the theme supplied to the royalist advocate. Poet's imagination had never invented one more calculated to touch the popular heart. This *imitatio Christi*, to which every private Christian theoretically aspires, had been realized by a true prince upon an actual scaffold with a graceful dignity of demeanor of which it may be said that nothing in life became him like the leaving it.

This moving situation Gauden, no mean stylist, set out in the best academical language of the period. Frigid and artificial it may read now, but the passion and pity, which is not in the book, was supplied by the readers of the time. And men are now dainty as to phrase when they meet with an expression of their own sentiments. The readers of *Eikon Basiliké*—and forty-seven editions were necessary to supply the demand of a population of eight millions—attributed to the pages of the book emotions raised in themselves by the tragic catastrophe. They never doubted that the meditations were those of the royal martyr, and held the book, in the words of Sir Edward Nicholas, for "the most exquisite, pious, and princely piece ever written." The Parliament thought themselves called upon to put forth a reply. If one book could cause such a commotion of spirits, another book could allay it—the ordinary illusion of those who do not consider that the vogue of a printed appeal depends, not on the contents of the appeal, but on a predisposition of the public temper.

Selden, the most learned man, not only of his party, but of Englishmen, was first thought of, but the task was finally assigned to the Latin Secretary. Milton's ready pen completed the answer, *Eikonoklastes*, a quarto of 242 pages, before October, 1649. It is, like all answers, worthless as a book. Eikonoklastes, the Image-breaker, takes the Image, Eikon, paragraph by paragraph, turning it round, and asserting the negative. To the Royalist view of the points in dispute Milton opposes the Independent view. A refutation, which follows each step of an adverse book, is necessarily devoid of originality. But Milton is worse than tedious; his reply is in a tone of rude railing and insolent swagger, which would have been always unbecoming, but which at this moment was grossly indecent.

Milton must, however, be acquitted of one charge which has been made against him, viz., that he taunts the King with his familiarity with Shakespere. The charge rests on a misunderstanding. In quoting *Richard III.* in illustration of his own meaning, Milton says, "I shall not instance an abstruse author, wherein the King might be less conversant, but one whom we well know was the closest companion of these his solitudes, William Shakespere." Though not an overt gibe, there certainly lurks an insinuation to Milton's Puritan readers, to whom stage plays were an abomination—an unworthy device of rhetoric, as appealing to a superstition in others which the writer himself does not share. In Milton's contemptuous reference to Sidney's *Arcadia* as a vain amatorious poem, we feel that the finer sense of the author of *L'Allegro* has suffered from immersion in the slough of religious and political faction.

Gauden, raking up material from all quarters, had inserted in his compilation a prayer taken from the *Arcadia.* Milton mercilessly works this topic against his adversary. It is surprising that this plagiarism from so well-known a book as the *Arcadia* should not have opened Milton's eyes to the unauthentic character of the *Eikon.* He alludes, indeed, to a suspicion which was abroad that one of the royal chaplains was a secret coadjutor. But he knew nothing of Gauden at the time of writing the *Eikonoklastes*, and it is probable he never came to know. The secret of the authorship of the *Eikon* was well kept, being known only to a very few persons—the two royal brothers, Bishop Morley, the Earl of Bristol, and Clarendon. These were all safe men, and Gauden was not likely to proclaim himself an impostor. He pleaded it, however, successfully as a claim to preferment at the Restoration, when the Church spoils came to be partitioned among the conquerors, and he received the bishopric of Exeter. A bishopric—because less than the highest preferment could not be offered to one whose pen had done such signal service; and Exeter—because the poorest see (then valued at 500*l.* a year) was good enough for a man who had taken the covenant and complied with the usurping government. By ceaseless importunity the author of the *Eikon Basilikê* obtained afterwards the see of Worcester, while the portion of the author of *Eikonoklastes* was poverty, infamy, and calumny. A century after Milton's death it was safe for the most popular writer of the day to say that the prayer from the *Arcadia* had been intepolated in the *Eikon* by Milton himself, and then by him charged upon the King as a plagiarism. (Johnson, *Lives of the Poets.*)

CHAPTER IX.

MILTON AND SALMASIUS—BLINDNESS.

THE mystery which long surrounded the authorship of *Eikon Basiliké* lends a literary interest to Milton's share in that controversy which does not belong to his next appearance in print. Besides, his pamphlets against Salmasius and Morus are written in Latin, and to the general reader in England and America inaccessible in consequence. In Milton's day it was otherwise; the widest circle of readers could only be reached through Latin. For this reason, when Charles II. wanted a public vindication of his father's momory, it was indispensable that it should be composed in that language. The *Eikon* was accordingly turned into Latin, by one of the royal chaplains, Earle, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury. But this was not enough; a defence in form was necessary, an *Apologia Socratis*, such as Plato composed for his master after his death. It must not only be written in Latin, but in such Latin as to ensure its being read.

In 1647 Charles II. was living at the Hague, and it so happened that the man who was in the highest repute in all Europe as a Latinist was professor at the neighboring university of Leyden. Salmasius (Claude de Saumaise) was commissioned to prepare a manifesto, which should be at once a vindication of Charles's memory, and an indictment against the regicide government. Salmasius was a man of enormous reading and no judgment, He says of himself that he wrote Latin more easily than his mother tongue (French). And his Latin was all the more readable because it was not classical or idiomatic. With all his reading—and Isaac Casaubon had said of him when in his teens that he had incredible erudition—he was still, at sixty, quite unacquainted with public affairs, and had neither the politician's tact necessary to draw a state paper as Clarendon would have drawn it, nor the literary tact which had enabled Erasmus to command the ear of the puplic, Salmasius undertook his task as a professional advocate, though without pay, and Milton accepted the duty of replying as advocate for the Parliament, also without reward; he was fighting for a cause which was not another's, but his own.

Salmasius's *Defensio regia*—that was the title of his book—reached England before the end of 1649. The Council of State, in very unnecessary alarm, issued a prohibition. On 8th January, 1650, the Council ordered "that Mr. Milton do prepare something in answer to the book of Salmasius." Early in March, 1651, Milton's answer, entitled *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, was out.

Milton was as much above Salmasius in mental power as he was inferior to him in extent of book knowledge. But the conditions of retort which he had chosen to accept neutralized this superiority. His greater power was spent in a greater force of invective. Instead of setting out the case of the Parliament in all the strength of which it was capable, Milton is intent upon tripping up Salmasius, contradicting him, and making him odious or ridiculous. He called his book a *Defence of the People of England;* but when he should have been justifying his clients from the charges of rebellion and regicide before the bar of Europe, Milton is bending all his invention upon personalities. He exaggerates the foibles of Salmasius, his vanity, and the vanity of Madame Salmasius, her ascendancy over her husband, his narrow pedantry, his ignorance of everything but grammar and words. He exhausts the Latin vocabulary of abuse to pile up every epithet of contumely and execration on the head of his adversary. It but amounts to calling Salmasius fool and knave through a couple of hundred pages, till the exaggeration of the style defeats the orator's purpose, and we end by regarding the whole, not as a serious pleading, but as an epideictic display. Hobbes said truly that the two books were "like two declamations, for and against, made by one and the same man as a rhetorical exercise" (*Behemoth*).

Milton's *Defensio* was not calculated to advance the cause of the Parliament, and there is no evidence that it produced any effect upon the public beyond that of raising Milton's personal credit. That England, and Puritan England, where humane studies were swamped in a biblical brawl, should produce a man who could write Latin as well as Salmasius, was a great surprise to the learned world in Holland. Salmasius was unpopular at Leyden, and there was therefore a predisposition to regard Milton's book with favor. Salmasius was twenty years older than Milton, and in these literary digliadations readers are always ready to side with a new writer. The contending interests of the two great English parties, the wider issue between republic and absolutism, the speculative inquiry into the right of resistance, were lost sight of by the spectators of this literary duel. The only question was whether Salmasius could beat the new champion, or the new man beat Salmasius, at a match of vituperation.

Salmasius of course put in a rejoinder. His rapid pen found no difficulty in turning off 300 pages of fluent Latin. It was his last occupation. He died at Spa, where he was taking the waters, in September, 1653, and his reply was not published till 1660, after the Restoration, when all interest had died out of the controversy. If it be true that the work was written at Spa, without books at hand, it is certainly a miraculous effort of memory. It does no credit to Salmasius. He had raked together, after the example of Scioppius against Scaliger, all the tittle-tattle which the English exiles had to retail about Milton and his antecedents. Bramhall, who bore Milton a special grudge, was the channel of some of this scandal, and Bramhall's source was possibly Chappell, the tutor with whom Milton had had the early misunderstanding. If any one thinks that classical studies of themselves cultivate the taste and the sentiments, let him look into Salmasius's

Responsio. There he will see the first scholar of his age not thinking it unbecoming to taunt Milton with his blindness, in such language as this: "A puppy, once my pretty little man, now blear-eyed, or rather a blindling; having never had any mental vision, he has now lost his bodily sight; a silly coxcomb, fancying himself a beauty; an unclean beast, with nothing more human about him than his guttering eyelids: the fittest doom for him would be to hang him on the highest gallows, and set his head on the Tower of London." These are some of the incivilties, not by any means the most revolting, but such as I dare reproduce, of this literary warfare.

Salmasius's taunt about Milton's venal pen is no less false than his other gibes. The places of those who served the Commonwealth were places of "hard work and short rations." Milton never received for his *Defensio* a sixpence beyond his official salary. It has indeed been asserted that he was paid 1000*l.* for it by order of Parliament, and this falsehood having been adopted by Johnson—himself a pensioner—has passed into all the biographies, and will no doubt continue to be repeated to the end of time. This is a just nemesis upon Milton, who on his part had twitted Salmasius with having been complimented by the exiled King with a purse of 100 Jacobuses for his performance. The one insinuation was as false as the other. Charles II. was too poor to offer more than thanks. Milton was too proud to receive for defending his country what the Parliament was willing to pay. Sir Peter Wentworth, of Lillingston Lovell, in Oxfordshire, left in his will 100*l.* to Milton for his book against Salmasius. But this was long after the Restoration, and Milton did not live to receive the legacy.

Instead of receiving an honorarium for his *Defence of the English People*, Milton had paid for it a sacrifice for which money could not compensate him. His eyesight, though quick, as he was a proficient with the rapier, had never been strong. His constant headaches, his late study, and (thinks Phillips) his perpetual tampering with physic to preserve his sight, concurred to bring the calamity upon him. It had been steadily coming on for a dozen years before, and about 1650 the sight of the left eye was gone. He was warned by his doctor that if he persisted in using the remaining eye for book-work, he would lose that too. "The choice lay before me," Milton writes in the *Second Defence*, "between dereliction of a supreme duty and loss of eyesight; in such a case I could not listen to the physician, not if Æsculapius himself had spoken from his sanctuary; I could not but obey that inward monitor, I know not what, that spake to me from heaven. I considered with myself that many had purchased less good with worse ill, as they who give their lives to reap only glory, and I thereupon concluded to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy in doing this, the greatest service to the common weal it was in my power to render."

It was about the early part of the year 1652 that the calamity was consummated. At the age of forty-three he was in total darkness. The deprivation of sight, one of the severest afflictions of which humanity is capable, falls more heavily on the man whose occupation lies among books than upon others. He who has most to lose, loses most. To most persons books are but an amusement, an interlude between the hours of serious occupation. The scholar is he who has found the key to knowledge, and knows his way about in the world of printed books. To find this key, to learn the map of his country, requires a long apprenticeship. This is a point few men can hope to reach much before the age of forty. Milton had attained it only to find fruition snatched from him. He had barely time to spell one line in the book of wisdom, before, like the wizard's volume in romance, it was hopelessly closed against him for ever. Any human being is shut out by loss of sight from accustomed pleasures, the scholar is shut out from knowledge. Shut out at forty-three, when his great work was not even begun! He consoles himself with the fancy that in his pamphlet, the *Defensio*, he had done a great work (*quanta maxima quivi*) for his country. This poor delusion helped him doubtless to support his calamity. He could not foresee that, in less than ten years, the great work would be totally annihilated, his pamphlet would be merged in the obsolete mass of civil war tracts, and the *Defensio*, on which he had expended his last year of eyesight, only mentioned because it had been written by the author of *Paradise Lost*.

The nature of Milton's disease is not ascertainable from the account he has given of it. In the well-known passage of *Paradise Lost*, iii. 25, he hesitates between amaurosis (drop serene) and cataract (suffusion)—

> "So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs,
> Or dim suffusion veil'd."

A medical friend, referred to by Professor Alfred Stern, tells him that some of the symptoms are more like glaucoma. Milton himself has left such an account as a patient ignorant of the anatomy of the organ could give. It throws no light on the nature of the malady. But it is characteristic of Milton that even his affliction does not destroy his solicitude about his personal appearance. The taunts of his enemies about "the lack-lustre eye, guttering with prevalent rheum," did not pass unfelt. In his *Second Defence* Milton informs the world that his eyes "are externally uninjured. They shine with an unclouded light, just like the eyes of one whose vision is perfect. This is the only point in which I am, against my will, a hypocrite." The vindication appears again in Sonnet XIX. "These eyes, though clear To outward view of blemish or of spot." In later years, when the exordium of Book iii. of *Paradise Lost* was composed, in the pathetic story of his blindness this little touch of vanity fades away as incompatible with the solemn dignity of the occasion.

CHAPTER X.

MILTON AND MORUS—THE SECOND DEFENCE—THE DEFENCE FOR HIMSELF.

Civil history is largely a history of wars between states, and literary history is no less the record of quarrels in print between jealous authors. Poets and artists, more susceptible than practical men, seem to live a life of perpetual wrangle. The history of these petty feuds is not healthy intellectual food, it is at best amusing scandal. But these quarrels of authors do not degrade the authors in our eyes; they only show them to be, what we knew, as vain, irritable and opinionative as other men. Ben Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Voltaire, Rousseau, belabor their enemies, and we see nothing incongruous in their doing so. It is not so when the awful majesty of Milton descends from the empyrean throne of contemplation to use the language of the gutter or the fish-market. The bathos is unthinkable. The universal intellect of Bacon shrank to the paltry pursuit of place. The disproportion between the intellectual capaciousness and the moral aim jars upon the sense of fitness, and the name of Bacon, wisest, meanest, has passed into a proverb. Milton's fall is far worse. It is not here a union of grasp of mind with an ignoble ambition, but the plunge of the moral nature itself from the highest heights to that despicable region of vulgar scurrility and libel which is below the level of average gentility and education. The name of Milton is a synonym for sublimity. He has endowed our language with the loftiest and noblest poetry it possesses, and the same man is found employing speech for the most unworthy purpose to which it can be put, that of defaming and vilifying a personal enemy, and an enemy so mean that barely to have been mentioned by Milton had been an honor to him. In Salmasius, Milton had at least been measuring his Latin against the Latin of the first classicist of the age. In Alexander Morus he wreaked august periods of Roman eloquence upon a vagabond preacher, of chance fortunes and tarnished reputation, a *græculus escuriens*, who appeared against Milton by the turn of accidents, and not as the representative of the opposite principle. In crushing Morus, Milton could not beguile himself with the idea that he was serving a cause.

In 1652 our country began to reap the fruits of the costly efforts it had made to obtain good government. A central authority was at last established, stronger than any which had existed since Elizabeth, and one which extended over Scotland and Ireland, no less than over England. The ecclesiastic and dynastic aims of the Stuart monarchy had been replaced by a national policy, in which the interests of the people of Great Britain sprang to the first place. The immediate consequence of this union of vigor and patriotism in the government was the self-assertion of England as a commercial, and therefore as a naval power. This awakened spirit of conscious strength meant war with the Dutch, who, while England was pursuing ecclesiastical ends, had possessed themselves of the trade of the world. War accordingly broke out early in 1652. Even before it came to real fighting, the war of pamphlets had recommenced. The prohibition of Salmasius's *Defensio regia* annulled itself as a matter of course, and Salmasius was free to prepare a second *Defensio* in answer to Milton; for the most vulnerable point of the new English commonwealth was through the odium excited on the Continent against regicide. And the quarter from which the monarchical pamphlets were hurled against the English republic was the press of the republic of the United Provinces, the country which had set the first example of successful rebellion against its lawful prince.

Before Salmasius's reply was ready, there was launched from the Hague, in March, 1652, a virulent royalist piece in Latin, under the title of *Regii sanguinis clamor ad cœlum* (Cry of the King's blood to Heaven against the English parricides). Its 160 pages contained the usual royalist invective in a rather common style of hyperbolical declamation, such as that "in comparison of the execution of Charles I., the guilt of the Jews in crucifying Christ was as nothing." Exaggerated praises of Salmasius were followed by scurrilous and rabid abuse of Milton. In the style of the most shameless Jesuit lampoon, the *Amphitheatrum* or the *Scaliger hypobolimæus*, and with Jesuit tactics, every odious crime is imputed to the object of the satire, without regard to truth or probability. Exiles are proverbially credulous, and it is likely enough that the gossip of the English refugees at the Hague was much employed in improving or inventing stories about the man who had dared to answer the royalist champion in Latin as good as his own. Salmasius in his *Defensio* had employed these stories, distorting the events of Milton's life to discredit him. But for the author of the *Clamor* there was no such excuse, for the book was composed in England, by an author living in Oxford and London, who had every opportunity for informing himself accurately of the facts about Milton's life and conversation. He chose rather to heap up at random the traditional vocabulary of defamation which the Catholic theologians had employed for some generations past as their best weapon against their adversaries. In these infamous productions, hatched by celibate pedants in the foul atmosphere of the Jesuit colleges, the gamut of charges always ranges from bad grammar to unnatural crime. The only circumstance which can be alleged in mitigation of the excesses of the *Regii sanguinis clamor* is that Milton had provoked the onfall by his own violence. He who throws dirt must expect that dirt will be thrown back at him; and when it comes to mud-throwing, the blackguard has, as it is right that he should have, the best of it.

The author of the *Clamor* was Peter Du Moulin, a son of the celebrated French Calvinist preacher of the same name. The author, not daring to intrust his pamphlet to an English press, had sent it over to Holland, where it was printed under the supervision of Alexander Morus. This Morus (More or Moir) was of Scottish parentage, but born (1616) at Castres, where his father was principal of the Protestant college. Morus fitted the *Clamor* with a preface, in which Milton was further reviled, and styled a "monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademtum." The secret of the authorship was strictly kept, and Morus, having been known to be concerned in the publication, was soon transformed in public belief into the author. So it was reported to Milton, and so Milton believed. He nursed his wrath, and took two years to meditate his blow. He caused inquiries to be made into Morus's antecedents. It happened that Morus's conduct had been wanting in discretion, especially in his relations with women. He had been equally imprudent in his utterances on some of the certainties of Calvinistic divinity. It was easy to collect any amount of evidence under both these heads. The system of kirk discipline offered a ready-made machinery of espionage and delation. The standing jest of the fifteenth century on the "governante" of the curé was replaced in Calvinistic countries by the anxiety of every minister to detect his brother minister in any intimacy upon which a scandalous construction could be put.

Morus endeavored, through every channel at his command, to convince Milton that he was not the author of the *Clamor*. He could have saved himself by revealing the real author, who was lurking all the while close to Milton's elbow, and whose safety depended on Morus's silence. This high-minded respect for another's secret is more to Morus's honor than any of the petty gossip about him is to his discredit. He had nothing to offer, therefore, but negative assurances, and mere denial weighed nothing with Milton, who was fully convinced that Morus lied from terror. Milton's *Defensio Secunda* came out in May, 1654. In this piece (written in Latin) Morus is throughout assumed to be the author of the *Clamor*, and as such is pursued through many pages in a strain of invective, in which banter is mingled with ferocity. The Hague tittle-tattle about Morus's love-affairs is set forth in the pomp of Milton's loftiest Latin. Sonorous periods could hardly be more disproportioned to their material content. To have kissed a girl is painted as the blackest of crimes. The sublime and the ridiculous are here blended without the step between. Milton descends even to abuse the publisher, Vlac, who had officially signed his name to Morus's preface. The mixture of fanatical choler and grotesque jocularity in which he rolls forth his charges of incontinence against Morus, and of petty knavery against Vlac, are only saved from being unseemly by being ridiculous. The comedy is complete when we remember that Morus had not written the *Clamor*, nor Vlac the preface. Milton's rage blinded him; he is mad Ajax castigating innocent sheep instead of Achæans.

The Latin pamphlets are indispensable to a knowledge of Milton's disposition. We see in them his grand disdain of his opponents, reproducing the concentrated intellectual scorn of the Latin Persius; his certainty of the absolute justice of his own cause, and the purity of his own motives. This lofty cast of thought is combined with an eagerness to answer the meanest taunts. The intense subjectivity of the poet breaks out in these paragraphs, and while he should be stating the case of the republic, he holds Eorope listening to an account of himself, his accomplishments, his studies and travels, his stature, the color of his eyes, his skill in fencing, etc. These egoistic utterances must have seemed to Milton's contemporaries to be intrusive and irrelevant vanity. *Paradise Lost* was not as yet, and to the Council of State Milton was, what he was to Whitelocke, "a blind man who wrote Latin." But these paragraphs, in which he talks of himself, are to us the only living fragments out of many hundred worthless pages.

To the *Defensio Secunda* there was of course a reply by Morus. It was entitled *Fides Publica*, because it was largely composed of testimonials to character. When one priest charges another with unchastity, the world looks on and laughs. But it is no laughing matter to the defendant in such an action. He can always bring exculpatory evidence, and in spite of any evidence he is always believed to be guilty. The effect of Milton's furious denunciation of Morus had been to damage his credit in religious circles, and to make mothers of families shy of allowing him to visit at their houses.

Milton might have been content with a victory which, as Gibbon said of his own, "over such an antagonist was a sufficient humiliation." Milton's magnanimity was no match for his irritation. He published a rejoinder to Morus's *Fides Publica*, reiterating his belief that Morus was author of the *Clamor*, but that it was no matter whether he was or not, since by publishing the book, and furnishing it with a recommendatory preface, he had made it his own. The charges against Morus's character he reiterated, and strengthened by new "facts," which Morus's enemies had hastened to contribute to the budget of calumny. These imputations on character, mixed with insinuations of unorthodoxy such as are ever rife in clerical controversy, Milton invests with the moral indignation of a prophet denouncing the enemies of Jehovah. He expends a wealth of vituperative Latin which makes us tremble, till we remember that it is put in motion to crush an insect.

This *Pro se defensio* (Defence for himself) appeared in August, 1655. Morus met it by a supplementary *Fides Publica*, and Milton, resolved to have the last word, met him by a *Supplement to the Defence.* The reader will be glad to hear that this is the end of the Morus controversy. We leave Milton's victim buried under the mountains of opprobrious Latin here heaped upon him—this "circumforaneus pharmacopola, vanissimus circulator, propudium hominis et prostibulum."

CHAPTER XI.

LATIN SECRETARYSHIP COMES TO AN END—MILTON'S FRIENDS.

It is no part of Milton's biography to relate the course of public events in these momentous years, merely because, as Latin Secretary, he formulated the despatches of the Protector or of his Council, and because these Latin letters are incorporated in Milton's works. On the course of affairs Milton's voice had no influence, as he had no part in their transaction. Milton was the last man of whom a practical politician would have sought advice. He knew nothing of the temper of the nation, and treated all that opposed his own view with supreme disdain. On the other hand, idealist though he was, he does not move in the sphere of speculative politics, or count among those philosophic names a few in each century who have influenced not action but thought. Accordingly his opinions have for us a purely personal interest. They are part of the character of the poet Milton, and do not belong to either world, of action or of thought.

The course of his political convictions up to 1654 has been traced in our narrative thus far. His breeding at home, at school, at college, was that of a member of the Established Church, but of the Puritan and Calvinistic, not of the Laudian and Arminian, party within its pale. By 1641 we find that his Puritanism has developed into Presbyterianism; he desires, not to destroy the Church, but to reform it by abolishing government by bishops, and substituting the Scotch or Genevan discipline. When he wrote his *Reason of Church Government* (1642), he is still a royalist; not in the cavalier sense of a person attached to the reigning sovereign, or the Stuart family, but still retaining the belief of his age that monarchy in the abstract had somewhat of divine sanction. Before 1649 the divine right of monarchy, and the claim of Presbytery to be scriptural, have yielded in his mind to a wider conception of the rights of the man and the Christian. To use the party names of the time, Milton the Presbyterian has expanded into Milton the Independent. There is to be no State Church, and instead of a monarchy there is to be a commonwealth. Very soon the situation develops the important question how this commonwealth shall be administered—whether by a representative assembly, or by a picked council, or a single governor. This question was put to a practical test in the Parliament of 1654. The experiment, begun in September, 1654, broke down, as we know, in January, 1655. Before it was tried we find Milton in his *Second Defence*, in May, 1654, recommending Cromwell to govern not by a Parliament, but by a council of officers; *i.e.*, he is a commonwealth's man. Arrived at this point, would Milton take his stand upon doctrinaire republicanism, and lose sight of liberty in the attempt to secure equality, as his friends Vane, Overton, Bradshaw would have done? Or would his idealist exaltation sweep him on into some one of the current fanaticisms, Leveller, Fifth Monarchy, or Muggletonian? Unpractical as he was, he was close enough to state affairs as Latin Secretary to see that personal government by the Protector was, at the moment, the only solution. If the liberties that had been conquered by the sword were to be maintained, between levelling chaos on the one hand and loyalist reaction on the other, it was the Protector alone to whom those who prized liberty above party names could look. Accordingly Milton may be regarded from the year 1654 onwards as an Oliverian, though with particular reservations. He saw—it was impossible for a man in his situation not to see—the unavoidable necessity which forced Cromwell, at this moment, to undertake to govern without a representative assembly. The political necessity of the situation was absolute, and all reasonable men who were embarked in the cause felt it to be so.

Through all these stages Milton passed in the space of twenty years—Church-Puritan, Presbyterian, Royalist, Independent, Commonwealth's man, Oliverian. These political phases were not the acquiescence of a placeman, or indifferentist, in mutations for which he does not care; still less were they changes either of party or of opinion. Whatever he thought, Milton thought and felt intensely, and expressed emphatically; and even his enemies could not accuse him of a shadow of inconsistency or wavering in his principles. On the contrary, tenacity, or persistence of idea, amounted in him to a serious defect of character. A conviction once formed dominated him, so that, as in the controversy with Morus, he could not be persuaded that he had made a mistake. No mind, the history of which we have an opportunity of intimately studying, could be more of one piece and texture than was that of Milton from youth to age. The names which we are obliged to give to his successive political stages do not indicate shades of color adopted from the prevailing political ground, but the genuine development of the public consciousness of Puritan England repeated in an individual. Milton moved forward, not because Cromwell and the rest advanced, but with Cromwell and the rest. We may perhaps describe the motive force as a passionate attachment to personal liberty, liberty of thought and action. This ideal force working in the minds of a few, "those worthies which are the soul of that enterprise" (*Tenure of Kings*), had been the mainspring of the whole revolution. The Levellers, Quakers, Fifth Monarchy men, and the wilder Anabaptist sects, only showed the workings of the same idea in men whose intellects had not been disciplined by education or experience. The idea of liberty, formulated into a doctrine, and bowed down to as a holy creed, made some of its best disciples, such as Harrison and Overton. useless at the most critical juncture. The party of anti-Oliverian republicans, the intransigentes, became one of the greatest difficulties of the Government. Milton, with his idealism, his thoroughness, and obstinate persistence, was not unlikely to have shipwrecked upon the same rock. He was saved by his constancy to the principle of religious liberty, which was found with the party that had destroyed the King because he would not be ruled by a Parliament, while in 1655 it supported the Protector in governing without a Parliament. Supreme authority in itself was not Cromwell's aim; he used it only to secure the fulfilment of those ideas of religious liberty, civil order, and Protestant ascendancy in Europe which filled his whole soul. To Milton as to Cromwell, forms, whether of worship or government, were but means to an end, and were to be changed whenever expediency might require.

In 1655, then, Milton was an Oliverian, but with reservations. The most important of these reservations regarded the relation of the state to the church. Cromwell never wholly dropped the scheme of a national church. It was, indeed, to be as comprehensive as possible; Episcopacy was pulled down, Presbytery was not set up, but individual ministers might be Episcopalian or Presbyterian in sentiment, provided they satisfied a certain standard, intelligible enough to that generation, of "godliness." Here Milton seems to have remained throughout, upon the old Independent platform; he will not have the civil power step over its limits into the province of religion at all. Many matters, in which the old prelatic church had usurped upon the domain of the state, should be replaced under the secular authority. But the spiritual region was matter of conscience, and not of external regulation.

A further reservation which Milton would make related to endowments, or the maintenance of ministers. The Protectorate, and the constitution of 1657, maintained an established clergy in the enjoyment of tithes or other settled stipends. Nothing was more abhorrent to Milton's sentiment than state payment in religious things. The minister who receives such pay becomes a state pensioner, a hireling. The law of tithes is a Jewish law, repealed by the Gospel, under which the minister is only maintained by the freewill offerings of the congregation to which he ministers. This antipathy to hired preachers was one of Milton's earliest convictions. It thrusts itself, rather importunately, into *Lycidas* (1636), and reappears in the Sonnet to Cromwell (*Sonnet* XVII., 1652), before it is dogmatically expounded in the pamphlet *Considerations touching means to remove Hirelings out of the Church* (1659). Of the two corruptions of the church by the secular power, one by force, the other by pay, Milton regards the last as the most dangerous. "Under force, though no thank to the forcers, true religion ofttimes best thrives and flourishes; but the corruption of teachers, most commonly the effect of hire, is the very bane of truth in them who are so corrupted." Nor can we tax this aversion to a salaried ministry with being a monomania of sect. It is essentially involved in the conception of religion as a spiritual state, a state of grace. A soul in this state can only be ministered to by a brother in a like frame of mind. To assign a place with a salary is to offer a pecuniary inducement to simulate this qualification. This principle may be wrong, but it is not unreasonable. It is the very principle on which the England of our day has decided against the endowment of science. The endowment of the church was to Milton the poison of religion, and in so thinking he was but true to his conception of religion. Cromwell, whatever may have been his speculative opinions, decided in favor of a state endowment, upon the reasons, or some of them, which have moved modern statesmen to maintain church establishmets.

With whatever reservations, Milton was an Oliverian. Supporting the Protector's policy, he admired his conduct, and has recorded his admiration in the memorable Sonnet XII. How the Protector thought of Milton, or even that he knew him at all, there remains no evidence. Napoleon said of Corneille that, if he had lived in his day, he would have made him his first minister. Milton's ideas were not such as could have value in the eyes of a practical statesman. Yet Cromwell was not always taking advice or discussing business. He who could take a liking for the genuine inwardness of the enthusiast George Fox might have been expected to appreciate equal unworldliness joined with culture and reading in Milton. "If," says Neal, "there was a man in England who excelled in any faculty or science, the Protector would find him out and reward him." But the excellence which the Protector prized was aptness for public employment, and this was the very quality in which Milton was deficient.

The poverty of Milton's state letters has been often remarked. Whenever weighty negotiations are going on, other pens than his are employed. We may ascribe this to his blindness. Milton could only dictate, and therefore everything intrusted to him must pass through an amanuensis, who might blab. One exception to the commonplace character of the state papers there is. The massacre of the Vaudois by their own sovereign, Charles Emanuel II., Duke of Savoy, excited a thrill of horror in England greater than the massacres of Scio or of Batak roused in our time. For in Savoy it was not humanity only that was outraged, it was a deliberate assault of the Papal half of Europe upon an outpost of the Protestant cause.

One effect of the Puritan revolution had been to alter entirely the foreign policy of England. By nature, by geographical position, by commercial occupations, and the free spirit of the natives, these islands were marked out to be members of the Northern confederacy of progressive and emancipated Europe. The foreign policy of Elizabeth had been steady adhesion to this law of nature. The two first Stuarts, coquetting with semi-catholicism at home, had leaned with all the weight of the crown and of government towards Catholic connections. The country had always offered a vain resistance; the Parliament of 1621 had been dismissed for advising James to join the Continental Protestants against Spain. It was certain, therefore, that when the government became Puritan, its foreign policy would again become that of Elizabeth. This must have been the case even if Cromwell had not been there. He saw not only that England must be a partner in the general Protestant interest, but that it fell to England to make the combination and to lead it. He acted in this with his usual decision. He placed England in her natural antagonism to Spain; he made peace with the Dutch; he courted the friendship of the Swiss Cantons, and the alliance of the Scandinavian and German Princes; and to France, which had a divided interest, he made advantageous offers provided the Cardinal would disconnect himself from the Ultramontane party.

It was in April, 1655, that the Vaudois atrocities suddenly added the impulse of religious sympathy to the permanent gravitation of the political forces. In all Catholic countries the Jesuits had by this time made themselves masters of the councils of the princes. The aim of Jesuit policy in the seventeenth century was nothing less than the entire extirpation of Protestantism and Protestants in the countries which they ruled. The inhabitants of certain Piedmontese valleys had held from time immemorial, and long before Luther, tenets and forms of worship very like those to which the German reformers had sought to bring back the church. The Vaudois were wretchedly poor, and had been incessantly the objects of aggression and persecution. In January, 1655, a sudden determination was taken by the Turin government to make them conform to the Catholic religion by force. The whole of the inhabitants of three valleys were ordered to quit the country within three days, under pain of death and confiscation of goods, unless they would become, or undertake to become, Catholic. They sent their humble remonstrances to the court of Turin against this edict. The remonstrances were disregarded, and military execution was ordered. On April 17, 1655, the soldiers, recruits from all countries—the Irish are specially mentioned—were let loose upon the unarmed population. Murder and rape and burning are the ordinary incidents of military execution. These were not enough to satisfy the ferocity of the Catholic soldiery, who revelled for many days in the infliction of all that brutal lust or savage cruelty can suggest to men.

It was nearly a month before the news reached England. A cry of horror went through the country, and Cromwell said it came "as near his heart as if his own nearest and dearest had been concerned." A day of humiliation was appointed, large collections were made for the sufferers, and a special envoy was dispatched to remonstrate with the Duke of Savoy. Cardinal Mazarin, however, seeing the importance which the Lord Protector would acquire by taking the lead on this occasion, stepped in, and patched up a hasty arrangement, the treaty of Pignerol, by which some sort of fallacious protection was ostensibly secured to the survivors of the massacre.

All the dispatches in this business were composed by Milton. But he only found the words; especially in the letter to the Duke of Savoy, the tone of which is much more moderate than we should have expected, considering that Blake was in the Mediterranean, and master of the coasts of the Duke's dominions. It is impossible to extract from these letters any characteristic trait, unless it is from the speech which the envoy, Morland, was instructed to deliver at Turin, in which it is said that all the Neros of all ages had never contrived inhumanities so atrocious as what had taken place in the Vaudois valleys. Thus restricted in his official communications, Milton gave vent to his personal feelings on the occasion in the well-known sonnet (XVIII.) "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold."

It has been already said that there remains no trace of any personal intercourse between Milton and Cromwell. He seems to have remained equally unknown to, or unregarded by, the other leading men in the Government or the Council. It is vain to conjecture the cause of this general neglect. Some have found it in the coldness with which Milton regarded, parts at least of, the policy of the Protectorate. Others refer it to the haughty nature of the man, who will neither ask a favor nor make the first advances towards intimacy. This last supposition in nearer the truth than the former. An expression he uses in a private letter may be cited in its support. Writing to Peter Heimbach in 1657, to excuse himself from giving him a recommendation to the English ambassador in Holland, he says: "I am sorry that I am not able to do this; I have very little acquaintance with those in power, inasmuch as I keep very much to my own house, and prefer to do so." Something may also be set down to the character of the Puritan leaders, alien to all literature, and knowing no books but the Bible.

The mental isolation in which the great poet lived his life is a remarkable feature of his biography, It was not only after the Restoration that he appears lonely and friendless ; it was much the same during the previous period of the Parliament and the Protectorate. Just at one time, about 1641, we hear from our best authority, Phillips, of his cultivating the society of men of his own age, and "keeping a gawdy-day," but this only once in three weeks or a month, with "two gentlemen of Gray's Inn." He had, therefore, known what it was to be sociable. But the general tenor of his life was other: proud, reserved, self-contained, repellent; brooding over his own ideas, not easily admitting into his mind the ideas of others. It is indeed an erroneous estimate of Milton to attribute to him a hard or austere nature. He had all the quick sensibility which belongs to the poetic temperament, and longed to be loved that he might love again. But he had to pay the penalty of all who believe in their own ideas, in that their ideas come between them and the persons that approach them, and constitute a mental barrier which can only be broken down by sympathy. And sympathy for ideas is hard to find, just in proportion as those ideas are profound, far-reaching, the fruit of long study and meditation. Hence it was that Milton did not associate readily with his contemporaries, but was affable and instructive in conversation with young persons, and those who would approach him in the attitude of disciples. His daughter Deborah, who could tell so little about him, remembered that he was delightful company, the life of a circle, and that he was so through a flow of subjects, and an unaffected cheerfulness and civility. I would interpret this testimony, the authenticity of which is indisputable, of his demeanor with the young, and those who were modest enough to wait upon his utterances. His isolation from his coevals, and from those who offered resistance, was the necessary consequence of his force of character, and the moral tenacity which endured no encroachment on the narrow scheme of thought over which it was incessantly brooding.

Though "his literature was immense," there was no humanity in it; it was fitted immovably into a scholastic frame-work. Hence literature was not a bond of sympathy between him and other men. We find him in no intimate relation with any of the contemporary men of learning, poets, or wits. From such of them as were of the cavalier party he was estranged by politics. That it was Milton's interposition which saved Davenant's life in 1651, even were the story better authenticated than it is, is not an evidence of intimacy. The three men most eminent for learning (in the usually received sense of the word) in England at that day were Selden (d. 1654), Gataker (d. 1654), and Archbishop Usher (d. 1656), all of whom were to be found in London. With none of the three is there any trace of Milton ever having had intercourse.

It is probable, but not certain, that it was at Milton's intercession that the Council proposed to subsidize Brian Walton in his great enterprise—the Polyglot Bible. This, the noblest monument of the learning of the Anglican Church, was projected and executed by the silenced clergy. Fifteen years of spoliation and humiliation thus bore better fruits of learning than the two centuries of wealth and honor which have since elapsed. As Brian Walton had, at one time, been curate of Allhallows, Bread Street, Milton may have known him, and it has been inferred that by Twells's expression—"The Council of State, before whom *some*, having *relation to them*, brought this business"—Milton is meant.

Not with John Hales, Cudworth, Whichcote, Nicholas Bernard, Meric Casaubon, nor with any of the men of letters who were churchmen, do we find Milton in correspondence. The interest of religion was more powerful than the interest of knowledge; and the author of *Eikonoklastes* must have been held in special abhorrence by the loyal clergy. The general sentiment of this party is expressed in Hacket's tirade, for which the reader is referred to his Life of Archbishop Williams.

From Presbyterians, such as Theophilus Gale or Baxter, Milton was equally separated by party. Of Hobbes, Milton's widow told Aubrey "that he was not of his acquaintance; that her husband did not like him at all, but would acknowledge him to be a man of great parts."

Owing to these circumstances, the circle of Milton's intimates contains few, and those undistinguished, names. One exception there was. In Andrew Marvel Milton found one congenial spirit, incorruptible amid poverty, unbowed by defeat. Marvel was twelve years Milton's junior, and a Cambridge man (Trinity), like himself. He had had better training still, having been for two years an inmate of Nunappleton, in the capacity of instructor to Mary, only daughter of the great Lord Fairfax. In 1652, Milton had recommended Marvel for the appointment of assistant secretary to himself, now that he was partially disabled by his blindness. The recommendation was not effectual at the time, another man, Philip Meadows, obtaining the post. It was not till 1657, when Meadows was sent on a mission to Denmark, that Marvel became Milton's colleague. He remained attached to him to the last. It were to be wished that he had left some reminiscences of his intercourse with the poet in his later years, some authentic notice of him in his prose letters, instead of a copy of verses, which attest, at once, his affectionate admiration for Milton's great epic, and his own little skill in versification.

Of Marchmont Needham and Samuel Hartlib mention has been already made. During the eight years of his sojourn in the house in Petty France, "he was frequently visited by persons of quality," says Phillips. The only name he gives is Lady Ranelagh. This lady, by birth a Boyle, sister of Robert Boyle, had placed first her nephew, and then her son, under Milton's tuition. Of an excellent understanding, and liberally cultivated, she sought Milton's society, and as he could not go to visit her, she went to him. There are no letters of Milton addressed to her, but he mentions her once as "a most superior woman," and when, in 1656, she left London for Ireland, he "grieves for the loss of the one acquaintance which was worth to him all the rest." These names, with that of Dr. Paget, exhaust the scanty list of Milton's intimates during this period.

To these older friends, however, must be added his former pupils, now become men, but remaining ever attached to their old tutor, seeing him often when in London, and when absent corresponding with him. With them he was "affable and instructive in conversation." Henry Lawrence, son of the President of Oliver's Council, and Cyriac Skinner, grandson of Chief Justice Coke, were special favorites. With these he would sometimes "by the fire help waste a sullen day;" and it was these two who called forth from him the only utterances of this time which are not solemn, serious, or sad. Sonnet XVI. is a poetical invitation to Henry Lawrence, "of virtuous father virtuous son," to a "neat repast," not without wine and song, to cheer the winter season. Besides these two, whose names are familiar to us through the *Sonnets*, there was Lady Ranelagh's son, Richard Jones, who went, in 1656, to Oxford, attended by his tutor, the German Heinrich Oldenburg. We have two letters (Latin) addressed to Jones at Oxford which are curious as showing that Milton was as dissatisfied with that university even after the reform, with Oliver Chancellor, and Owen Vice-Chancellor, as he had been with Cambridge.

His two nephews, also his pupils, must have ceased at a very early period to be acceptable either as friends or companions. They had both—but the younger brother, John, more decidedly than Edward—passed into the opposite camp. This is a result of the uncle's strict system of Puritan discipline, which will surprise no one who has observed that, in education, mind reacts against the pressure of will. The teacher who seeks to impose his views raises antagonists, and not disciples. The generation of young men who grew up under the Commonwealth were in intellectual revolt against the constraint of Puritanism before they proceeded to political revolution against its authority. Long before the reaction embodied itself in the political fact of the Restoration, it had manifested itself in popular literature. The theatres were still closed by the police, but Davenant found a public in London to applaud an "entertainment by declamations and music, after the manner of the ancients" (1656). The press began timidly to venture on books of amusement, in a style of humor which seemed ribald and heathenish to the staid and sober covenanter. Something of the jollity and merriment of old Elizabethan days seemed to be in the air. But with a vast difference. Instead of "dallying with the innocence of love," as in *England's Helicon* (1600), or *The Passionate Pilgrim*, the sentiment, crushed and maimed by unwise repression, found a less honest and less refined expression. The strongest and most universal of human passions when allowed freedom, light, and air becomes poetic inspiration. The same passion coerced by police is but driven underground.

So it came to pass that, in these years, the Protector's Council of State was much exercised by attempts of the London press to supply the public, weary of sermons, with some light literature of the class now (1879) known as facetious. On April 25, 1656, the august body which had upon its hands the government of three kingdoms and the protection of the Protestant interest militant throughout Europe, could find nothing better to do than to take into consideration a book entitled *Sportive Wit, or The Muse's Merriment.* Sad to relate, the book was found to contain "much lascivious and profane matter." And the editor?—no other than John Phillips. Milton's youngest nephew! It is as if nature, in reasserting herself, had made deliberate selection of its agent. The pure poet of *Comus*, the man who had publicly boasted his chastity, had trained up a pupil to become the editor of an immodest drollery! Another and more original production of John Phillips, the *Satyr against Hypocrites*, was an open attack, with mixed banter and serious indignation, on the established religion. "It affords," says Godwin, "unequivocal indication of the company now kept by the author with cavaliers, and *bon vivans*, and and demireps, and men of ruined fortunes." Edward Phillips, the elder brother, followed suit with the *Mysteries of Love and Eloquence*

(1658), a book, according to Godwin, "entitled to no insignificant rank among the multifarious productions issued from the press, to debauch the manners of the nation, and to bring back the King." Truly, a man's worst vexations come to him from his own relations. Milton had the double annoyance of the public exposure before the Council of State, and the private reflection on the failure of his own system of education.

The homage which was wanting to the prophet in his own country was more liberally tendered by foreigners. Milton, it must be remembered, was yet only known in England as the pamphleteer of strong republican, but somewhat eccentric, opinions. On the Continent he was the answerer of Salmasius, the vindicator of liberty against despotic power. "Learned foreigners of note," Phillips tells us, "could not part out of this city without giving a visit" to his uncle. Aubrey even exaggerates this flocking of the curious, so far as to say that some came over into England only to see Oliver Protector and John Milton. That Milton had more than he liked of these sightseers, who came to look at him when he could not see them, we can easily believe. Such visitors would of course be from Protestant countries. Italians, though admiring his elegant Latin, had "disliked him on account of his too severe morals." A glimpse, and no more than a glimpse, of the impression such visitors could carry away, we obtain in a letter written, in 1651, by a Nüremberg pastor, Christolph Arnold, to a friend at home:—"The strenuous defender of the new *régime*, Milton, enters readily into conversation; his speech is pure, his written style very pregnant. He has committed himself to a harsh, not to say unjust, criticism of the old English divines, and of their Scripture commentaries, which are truly learned, be witness the genius of learning himself!" It must not be supposed from this that Milton had discoursed with Arnold on the English divines. The allusion is to that onfall upon the reformers, Cranmer, Latimer, etc., which had escaped from Milton's pen in 1642 to the great grief of his friends. If the information of a dissenting minister, one Thomas Bradbury, who professed to derive it from Jeremiah White, one of Oliver's chaplains, may be trusted, Milton "was allowed by the Parliament a weekly table for the entertainment of foreign ministers and persons of learning, such especially as came from Protestant states, which allowance was also continued by Cromwell."

Such homage, though it may be a little tiresome, may have gratified for the moment the political writer, but it would not satisfy the poet who was dreaming of an immortality of far other fame—

> "Two equal'd with me in fate,
> So were I equal'd with them in renown."

And to one with Milton's acute sensibility, yearning for sympathy and love, dependent, through his calamity, on the eyes, as on the heart, of others, his domestic interior was of more consequence to him than outside demonstrations of respect, Four years after the death of his first wife he married again. We know nothing more of this second wife, Catharine Woodcock, than what may be gathered from the Sonnet XIX. in which he commemorated his "late espoused saint," in whose person "love, sweetness, goodness shin'd." After only fifteen months' union she died (1658), after having given birth to a daughter, who lived only a few months. Milton was again alone.

His public functions as Latin Secretary had been contracted within narrow limits by his blindness. The heavier part of the duties had been transferred to others, first to Weckherlin, then to Philip Meadows, and lastly to Andrew Marvel. The more confidential diplomacy Thurloe reserved for his own cabinet. But Milton continued up to the last to be occasionally called upon for a Latin epistle. On September 3, 1658, passed away the master-mind which had hitherto compelled the jarring elements in the nation to co-exist together, and chaos was let loose. Milton retained and exercised his secretaryship under Richard Protector, and even under the restored Parliament. His latest Latin letter is of date May 16, 1659. He is entirely outside all the combinations and complications which filled the latter half of that year, after Richard's retirement in May. It is little use writing to foreign potentates now, for, with one man's life, England has fallen from her lead in Europe, and is gravitating towards the Catholic and reactionary powers, France and Spain. Milton, though he knows nothing more than one of the public, "only what it appears to us without-doors," he says, will yet write about it. The habit of pamphleteering was on him, and he will write what no one will care to read. The stiff-necked commonwealth men, with their doctrinaire republicanism, were standing out for their constitutional ideas, blind to the fact that the royalists were all the while undermining the ground beneath the feet alike of Presbyterian and Independent, Parliament and army. The Greeks of Constantinople denouncing the Azymite, when Mahmoud II. was forming his lines round the doomed city, were not more infatuated than these pedantic commonwealth men with their parliamentarianism when Charles II. was at Calais.

Not less inopportune than the public men of the party, Milton chooses this time for inculcating his views on endowments. A fury of utterance was upon him, and he poured out, during the death-throes of the republic, pamphlet upon pamphlet, as fast as he could get them written to his dictation. These extemporized effusions betray in their style, hurry, and confusion the restlessness of a coming despair. The passionate enthusiasm of the early tracts is gone, and all the old faults, the obscurity, the inconsecutiveness, the want of arrangement, are exaggerated. In the *Ready Way* there is a monster sentence of thirty-nine lines, containing 336 words. Though his instincts were perturbed, he was unaware what turn things were taking. In February, 1660, when all persons of ordinary information saw that the restoration of monarchy was certain, Milton knew it not, and put out a tract to show his countrymen a *Ready and easy way to establish a free Commonwealth.* With the same pertinacity with which he had adhered to his own assumption that Morus was author of the *Clamor*, he now refused to believe in the return of the Stuarts. Fast as his pen moved, events outstripped it, and he has to rewrite the *Ready and easy way* to suit their march. The second edition is overtaken by the Restoration, and it should seem was never circulated. Milton will ever "give advice to Sylla," and writes a letter of admonition to Monk, which, however, never reached either the press or Sylla.

The month of May, 1660, put a forced end to his illusion. Before the 29th of that month he had fled from the house in Petty France, and been sheltered by a friend in the city. In this friend's house, in Bartholomew Close, he lay concealed till the passing of the Act of Oblivion, 29th August. Phillips says that he owed his exemption from the vengeance which overtook so many of his friends to Andrew Marvel, "who acted vigorously in his behalf, and made a considerable party for him." But in adding that "he was so far excepted as not to bear any office in the commonwealth," Phillips is in error. Milton's name does not occur in the Act. Pope used to tell that Davenant had employed his interest to protect a brother-poet, thus returning a similiar act of generosity done to himself by Milton in 1650. Pope had this story from Betterton the actor. How far Davenant exaggerated to Betterton his own influence or his exertions, we cannot tell. Another account assigns the credit of the intervention to Secretary Morris and Sir Thomas Clarges. After all, it is probable that he owed his immunity to his insignificance and his harmlessness. The formality of burning two of his books by the hands of the hangman was gone through. He was also for some time during the autumn of 1660 in the custody of the sergeant-at-arms, for on 15th December there is an entry in the Commons journals ordering his discharge. It is characteristic of Milton that, even in this moment of peril, he stood up for his rights, and refused to pay an overcharge, which the official thought he might safely exact from a rebel and a covenanter.

THIRD PERIOD. 1660–1674.

CHAPTER XII.

BIOGRAPHICAL.—LITERARY OCCUPATION.—RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

REVOLUTIONS are of two kinds; they are either progressive or reactionary. A revolution of progress is often destructive, sweeping away much which should have been preserved. But such a revolution has a regenerating force; it renews the youth of a nation, and gives free play to its vital powers. Lost limbs are replaced by new. A revolution of reaction, on the other hand, is a benumbing influence, paralyzing effort, and levelling character. In such a conservative revolution the mean, the selfish, and the corrupt come to the top; man seeks ease and enjoyment rather than duty; virtue, honor, patriotism, and disinterestedness disappear altogether from a society which has ceased to believe in them.

The Restoration of 1660 was such a revolution. Complete and instantaneous inversion of the position of the two parties in the nation, it occasioned much individual hardship. But this was only the fortune of war, the necessary consequence of party ascendancy. The Restoration was much more than a triumph of the party of the royalists over that of the roundheads; it was the death-blow to national aspiration, to all those aims which raise man above himself. It destroyed and trampled under foot his ideal. The Restoration was a moral catastrophe. It was not that there wanted good men among the churchmen, men as pious and virtuous as the Puritans whom they displaced. But the royalists came back as the party of reaction, reaction of the spirit of the world against aceticism, of self-indulgence against duty, of materialism against idealism. For a time virtue was a public laughing-stock, and the word "saint," the highest expression in the language for moral perfection, connoted everything that was ridiculous. I do not speak of the gallantries of Whitehall, which figure so prominently in the histories of the reign. Far too much is made of these, when they are made the scapegoat of the moralist. The style of court manners was a mere incident on the surface of social life. The national life was far more profoundly tainted by the discouragement of all good men, which penetrated every shire and every parish, than by the distant reports of the loose behavior of Charles II. Servility, meanness, venality, time-serving, and a disbelief in virtue diffused themselves over the nation like a pestilential miasma, the depressing influence of which was heavy, even upon those souls which individually resisted the poison. The heoric age of England had passed away, not by gradual decay, by imperceptible degeneration, but in a year, in a single day, like the winter's snow in Greece. It is for the historian to describe and unfold the sources of this contagion. The biographer of Milton has to take note of the political change only as it affected the worldly circumstances of the man, the spiritual environment of the poet, and the springs of his inspiration.

The consequences of the Restoration to Milton's worldly fortunes were disastrous. As a partisan he was necessarily involved in the ruin of his party. As a matter of course, he lost his Latin secretaryship. There is a story that he was offered to be continued in it, and that when urged to accept the offer by his wife, he replied, "Thou art in the right; you, as other women, would ride in your coach; for me, my aim is to live and die an honest man." This tradition, handed on by Pope, is of doubtful authenticity. It is not probable that the man who had printed of Charles I. what Milton had printed, could have been offered office under Charles II. Even were court favor to be purchased by concessions, Milton was not the man to make them, or to belie his own antecedents, as Marchmont Needham, Dryden, and so many others did. Our wish for Milton is that he should have placed himself from the beginning above party. But he had chosen to be the champion of a party, and he loyally accepted the consequences. He escaped with life and liberty. The reaction was not bloodthirsty. Milton was already punished by the loss of his sight, and he was now mulcted in three fourths of his small fortune. A sum of 2000*l.* which he had placed in government securities was lost, the restored monarchy refusing to recognize the obligations of the protectorate. He lost another like sum by mismanagement and for want of good advice, says Phillips, or, according to his granddaughter's statement, by the dishonesty of a money-scrivener. He had also to give up, without compensation, some property, valued at 60*l.* a year, which he had purchased when the estates of the Chapter of Westminster were sold. In the great fire, 1666, his house in Bread Street was destroyed. Thus, from easy circumstances, he was reduced, if not to destitution, at least to narrow means. He left at his death 1500*l.*, which Phillips calls a considerable sum. And if he sold his books, one by one, during his lifetime, this was because, knowing their value, he thought he could dispose of them to greater advantage than his wife would be able to do.

But far outweighing such considerations as pecuniary ruin and personal discomfort, was the shock which the moral nature felt from the irretrievable discomfiture of all the hopes, aims, and aspirations which had hitherto sustained and nourished his soul. In a few months the labor of twenty years was swept away without a trace of it being left. It was not merely a political defeat of his party, it was the total wreck of the principles of the social and religious ideal, with which Milton's life was bound up. Others, whose convictions only had been engaged in the cause, could hasten to accommodate themselves to the new era, or even to transfer their services to the conqueror. But such flighty allegiance was not possible for Milton, who had embarked in the Puritan cause not only intellectual convictions, but all the generosity and ardor of his passionate nature. "I conceive myself to be," he had written in 1642, "not as mine own person, but as a member incorporate into that truth whereof I was persuaded, and whereof I had declared myself openly to be the partaker." It was now in the moment of overthrow that Milton became truly great. "Wandellos im ewigen Ruin," he stood alone, and became the party himself. He took the only course open to him, turned away his thoughts from the political disaster, and directed the fierce enthusiasm which burned within upon an absorbing poetic task. His outward hopes were blasted, and he returned with concentrated ardor to woo the muse from whom he had so long truanted. The passion which seethes beneath the stately march of the verse in *Paradise Lost* is not the hopeless moan of despair, but the intensified fanaticism which defies misfortune to make it "bate one jot of heart or hope." The grand loneliness of Milton after 1668 "is reflected in his three great poems by a sublime independence of human sympathy like that with which mountains fascinate and rebuff us."

Late, then, but not too late, Milton, at the age of fifty-two, fell back upon the rich resources of his own mind, upon poetical composition, and the study of good books, which he always asserted to be necessary to nourish and sustain a poet's imagination. Here he had to contend with the enormous difficulty of blindness. He engaged a kind of attendant to read to him. But this only sufficed for English books—imperfectly even for these—and the greater part of the choice, not extensive, library upon which Milton drew, was Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and the modern languages of Europe. In a letter to Heimbach, of date 1666, he complains pathetically of the misery of having to spell out, letter by letter, the Latin words of the epistle to the attendant who was writing to his dictation. At last he fell upon the plan of engaging young friends, who occasionally visited him, to read to him and to write for him. In the precious volume of Milton MSS. preserved in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, six different hands have been distinguished. Who they were is not always known. But Phillips tells us that "he had daily about him one or other to read to him; some persons of man's estate, who of their own accord greedily catch'd at the opportunity of being his reader, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; others of younger years sent by their parents to the same end." Edward Phillips himself, who visited his uncle to the last, may have been among the number, as much as his own engagements as tutor, first to the only son of John Evelyn, then in the family of the

Earl of Pembroke, and finally to the Bennets, Lord Arlington's children, would permit him. Others of these casual readers were Samuel Barrow, body physician to Charles II., and Cyrac Skinner, of whom mention has been already made.

To a blind man, left with three little girls, of whom the youngest was only eight at the Restoration, marriage seemed equally necessary for their sake as for his own. Milton consulted his judicious friend and medical adviser, Dr. Paget, who recommended to him Elizabeth Minshull, of a family of respectable position near Nantwich, in Cheshire. She was some distant relation of Paget, who must have felt the terrible responsibility of undertaking to recommend. She justified his selection. The marriage took place in February, 1663, and during the remaining eleven years of his life the poet was surrounded by the thoughtful attentions of an active and capable woman. There is but scanty evidence as to what she was like, either in person or character. Aubrey, who knew her, says she was "a gent. (? genteel) person, (of) a peaceful and agreeable humor." Newton, Bishop of Bristol, who wrote in 1749, had heard that she was "a woman of a most violent spirit, and a hard mother-in-law to his children." It is certain that she regarded her husband with great veneration, and studied his comfort. Mary Fisher, a maid-servant in the house, deposed that at the end of his life, when he was sick and infirm, his wife having provided something for dinner she thought he would like, he "spake to his said wife these or like words, as near as this deponent can remember: 'God have mercy, Betty, I see thou wilt perform according to thy promise, in providing me such dishes as I think fit while I live, and when I die thou knowest I have left thee all.'" There is no evidence that his wife rendered him literary assistance. Perhaps, as she looked so thoroughly to his material comfort, her function was held, by tacit agreement, to end there.

As casual visitors, or volunteer readers, were not always in the way, and a hired servant who could not spell Latin was of very restricted use, it was not unnatural that Milton should look to his daughters, as they grew up, to take a share in supplying his voracious demand for intellectual food. Anne, the eldest, though she had handsome features, was deformed and had an impediment in her speech, which made her unavailable as a reader. The other two, Mary and Deborah, might now have been of inestimable service to her father, had their dispositions led them to adapt themselves to his needs and the circumstances of the house. Unfortunate it was for Milton that his biblical views on the inferiority of women had been reduced to practice in the bringing up of his own daughters. It cannot, indeed, be said that the poet whose imagination created the Eve of *Paradise Lost* regarded woman as the household drudge, existing only to minister to man's wants. Of all that men have said of women, nothing is more loftily conceived than the well-known passage at the end of Book viii.:

"When I approach
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems,
And in herself complete, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do or say
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;
All higher knowledge in her presence falls
Degraded; wisdom in discourse with her
Loses discountenanc'd, and like folly shows;
Authority and reason on her wait,
As one intended first, not after made
Occasionally; and, to consummate all,
Greatness of mind, and nobleness, their seat
Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
About her, as a guard angelic plac'd."

Bishop Newton thought that, in drawing Eve, Milton had in mind his third wife, because she had hair the color of Eve's "golden tresses." But Milton had never seen Elizabeth Minshull. If reality suggested any trait, physical or mental, of the Eve, it would certainly have been some woman seen in earlier years.

But wherever Milton may have met with an incarnation of female divinity such as he has drawn, it was not in his own family. We cannot but ask, how is it that one, whose type of woman is the loftiest known to English literature, should have brought up his own daughters on so different a model? Milton is not one of the false prophets, who turn round and laugh at their own enthusiasms, who say one thing in their verses, and another thing over their cups. What he writes in his poetry is what he thinks, what he means, and what he will do. But in directing the bringing up of his daughters, he put his own typical woman entirely on one side. His practice is framed on the principle that

"Nothing lovelier can be found
In woman, than to study household good."
Paradise Lost, ix. 233.

He did not allow his daughters to learn any language, saying with a gibe that one tongue was enough for a woman. They were not sent to any school, but had some sort of teaching at home from a mistress. But in order to make them useful in reading to him, their father was at the pains to train them to read aloud in five or six languages, of none of which they understood one word. When we think of the time and labor which must have been expended to teach them to do this, it must occur to us that a little more labor would have sufficed to teach them so much of one or two of the languages as would have made their reading a source of interest and improvement to themselves. This Milton refused to do. The consequence was, as might have been expected, the occupation became so irksome to them that they rebelled against it. In the case of one of them, Mary, who was like her mother in person, and took after her in other respects, this restiveness passed into open revolt. She first resisted, then neglected, and finally came to hate, her father. When some one spoke in her presence of her father's approaching marriage, she said, "that was no news to hear of his wedding; but if she could hear of his death, that was something." She combined with Anne, the eldest daughter, "to counsel his maid-servant to cheat him in his marketings." They sold his books without his knowledge. "They made nothing of deserting him," he was often heard to complain. They continued to live with him five or six years after his marriage. But at last the situation became intolerable to both parties, and they were sent out to learn embroidery in gold or silver, as a means of obtaining their livelihood. Deborah, the youngest, was included in the same arrangement, though she seems to have been more helpful to her father, and to have been at one time his principal reader. Aubrey says that he "taught her Latin, and that she was his amanuensis." She even spoke of him when she was old—she lived to be seventy-four—with some tenderness. She was once, in 1725, shown Faithorne's crayon drawing of the poet, without being told for whom it was intended. She immediately exclaimed, "O Lord! that is the picture of my father!" and stroking down the hair of her forehead, added, "Just so my father wore his hair."

One of Milton's volunteer readers, and one to whom we owe the most authentic account of him in his last years, was a young Quaker, named Thomas Ellwood. Milton's Puritanism had been all his life slowly gravitating in the direction of more and more liberty, and though he would not attach himself to any sect, he must have felt in no remote sympathy with men who repudiated state interference in religious matters and disdained ordinances. Some such sympathy with the purely spirituality of the Quaker may have disposed Milton favorably towards Ellwood. The acquaintance once begun, was cemented by mutual advantage. Milton, besides securing an intelligent reader, had a pleasure in teaching; and Ellwood, though the reverse of humble, was teachable from desire to expand himself. Ellwood took a lodging near the poet, and went to him every day, except "first-day," in the afternoon, to read Latin to him.

Milton's frequent change of abode has been thought indicative of a restless temperament, seeking escape from petty miseries by change of scene. On emerging from hiding, or escaping from the sergeant-at-arms in 1660, he lived for a short time in Holborn, near Red Lion Square. From this he removed to Jewin Street, and moved again, on his marriage, in 1662, to the house of Millington, the bookseller, who was now beginning business, but who, before his death in 1704, had accumulated the largest stock of second-hand books to be found in London. His last remove was to a house in a newly-created row facing the Artillery-ground, on the site of the west side of what is now called Bunhill Row. This was his abode from his marriage till his death, nearly twelve years, a longer stay than he had made in any other residence. This is the house which must be associated with the poet of *Paradise Lost*, as it was here that the poem was in part written, and wholly revised and finished. But the Bunhill Row house is only producible by the imagination; every trace of it has long been swept away, though the name Milton Street, bestowed upon a neighboring street, preserves the remembrance of the poet's connection with the locality. Here "an ancient clergyman of Dorsetshire, Dr. Wright, found John Milton in a small chamber, hung with rusty green, sitting in an elbow-chair, and dressed neatly in black; pale, but not cadaverous, his hands and fingers gouty and with chalk-stones." At the door of this house, sitting in the sun, looking out upon the Artillery-ground, "in a gray, coarse cloth coat," he would receive his visitors. On colder days he would walk for hours—three or four hours at a time—in his garden. A garden was a *sine qua non*, and he took care to have one to every house he lived in.

His habit in early life had been to study late into the night. After he lost his sight, he changed his hours, and retired to rest at nine. In summer he rose at four, in winter at five, and began the day with having the Hebrew Scriptures read to him. "Then he contemplated. At seven his man came to him again, and then read to him and wrote till dinner. The writing was as much as the reading" (Aubrey). Then he took exercise, either walking in the garden, or swinging in a machine. His only recreation, besides conversation, was music. He played the organ and bass-viol, the organ most. Sometimes he would sing himself, or get his wife to sing to him, though she had, he said, no ear, yet a good voice. Then he went up to his study to be read to till six. After six his friends were admitted to visit him, and would sit with him till eight. At eight he went down to supper, usually olives or some light thing. He was very abstemious in his diet, having to contend with a gouty diathesis. He was not fastidious in his choice of meats, but content with anything that was in season, or easy to be procured. After supping thus sparingly, he smoked a pipe of tobacco, drank a glass of water, and then retired to bed. He was sparing in his use of wine. His Samson, who in this as in other things is Milton himself, allays his thirst "from the clear milky juice."

Bed, with its warmth and recumbent posture, he found favorable to composition. At other times he would compose or prune his verses as he walked in the garden, and then, coming in, dictate. His verse was not at the command of his will. Sometimes he would lay awake the whole night, trying but unable to make a single line. At other times lines flowed without premeditation, "with a certain impetus and æstro." His vein, he said, flowed only from the vernal to the autumnal equinox. Phillips here transposes the seasons, though he has preserved the authentic fact of intermittent inspiration. It was the spring which restored to Milton, as it has to other poets, the buoyancy necessary to composition. What he composed at night he dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm. He would dictate forty lines, as it were in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number.

Milton's piety is admitted, even by his enemies; and it is a piety which oppresses his writings as well as his life. The fact that a man, with a deep sense of religion, should not have attended any place of public worship, has given great trouble to Milton's biographers. And the principal biographers of this thorough-going non-conformist have been Anglican clergymen; Bishop Newton, Todd, Mitford; Dr. Johnson, more clerical than any cleric, being no exception. Mitford would give Milton a dispensation on the score of his age and infirmities. But the cause lay deeper. A profound apprehension of the spiritual world leads to a disregard of rites. To a mind so disposed externals become, first indifferent, then impediment. Ministration is officious intrusion. I do not find that Milton, though he wrote against paid ministers as hirelings, ever expressly formulated an opinion against ministers as such. But as has already been hinted, there grew up in him, in the last period of his life, a secret sympathy with the mode of thinking which came to characterize the Quaker sect. Not that Milton adopted any of their peculiar fancies. He affirms categorically the permissibility of oaths, of military service, and requires that women should keep silence in the congregation. But in negativing all means of arriving at truth except the letter of Scripture interpreted by the inner light, he stood upon the same platform as the followers of George Fox.

Milton's latest utterance on theological topics is found in a tract published by him the year before his death, 1673. The piece is entitled *Of true religion, heresy, schism, toleration*; but its meagre contents do not bear out the comprehensiveness of the title. The only matter really discussed in the pages of the tract is the limit of toleration. The stamp of age is upon the style, which is more careless and incoherent even than usual. He has here dictated his extempore thoughts, without premeditation or revision, so that we have here a record of Milton's habitual mind. Having watched him gradually emancipating himself from the contracted Calvinistic mould of the Bread Street home, it is disappointing to find that, at sixty-five, his development has proceeded no further than we here find. He is now willing to extend toleration to all sects who make the Scriptures their sole rule of faith. Sects may misunderstand Scripture, but to err is the condition of humanity, and will be pardoned by God, if diligence, prayer, and sincerity have been used. The sects named as to be tolerated are—Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Arians, Socinians, Arminians. They are to be tolerated to the extent of being allowed, on all occasions, to give account of their faith, by arguing, preaching in their several assemblies, writing and printing,

This tract alone is sufficient refutation of an idle story that Milton died a Roman Catholic. It is not well vouched, being hearsay three times removed. Milton's younger brother, Sir Christopher, is said to have said so at a dinner entertainment. If he ever did say as much, it must be set down to that peculiar form of credulity which makes perverts think that every one is about to follow their example. In Christopher Milton, "a man of no parts or ability, and a superstitious nature" (Toland), such credulity found a congenial soil.

In this pamphlet the principle of toleration is flatly enunciated in opposition to the practice of the Restoration. But the principle is rested not on the statesman's ground of the irrelevancy of religious dispute to good government, but on the theological ground of the venial nature of religious error. And to permissible error there are very narrow limits; limits which exclude Catholics. For Milton will exclude Romanists from toleration, not on the statesman's ground of incivism, but on the theologian's ground of idolatry. All his antagonism in this tract is reserved for the Catholics. There is not a hint of discontent with the prelatry, once intolerable to him. Yet that prelatry was now scourging the non-conformists with scorpions instead of with whips, with its Act of Uniformity, its Conventicle Act, its Five-mile Act, filling the jails with Milton's own friends and fellow-religionists. Several times, in these thirteen pages, he appeals to the practice or belief of the Church of England, once even calling it "our church."

This tract on toleration was Milton's latest published work. But he was preparing for the press at the time of his death a more elaborate theological treatise. Daniel Skinner, a nephew of his old friend Cyriac, was serving as Milton's amanuensis in writing out a fair copy. Death came before a third of the work of correction had been completed, 196 pages out of 735, of which the whole rough draft consists. The whole remained in Daniel Skinner's hands in 1674. Milton, though in his preface he is aware that his pages contain not a little which will be unpalatable to the reigning opinion in religion, would have dared publication, if he could have passed the censor. But Daniel Skinner, who was a Fellow of Trinity, and had a career before him, was not equally free. What could not appear in London, however, might be printed at Amsterdam. Skinner, accordingly, put both the theological treatise and the epistles written by the Latin Secretary into the hands of Daniel Elzevir. The English government getting intelligence of the proposed publication of the foreign correspondence of the Parliament and the Protector, interfered, and pressure was put upon Skinner, through the Master of Trinity, Isaac Barrow. Skinner hastened to save himself from the fate which in 1681 befell Locke, and gave up to the Secretary of State not only the Latin letters, but the MS. of the theological treatise. Nothing further was known as to the fate of the MS. till 1823, when it was disinterred from one of the presses of the old State Paper Office. The Secretary of State, Sir Joseph Williamson, when he retired from office in 1678, instead of carrying away his correspondence, as had been the custom, left it behind him. Thus it was that the *Treatise of Christian Doctrine* first saw light one hundred and fifty years after the author's death.

In a work which had been written as a text-book for the use of learners, there can be little scope for originality. And Milton follows the division of the matter into heads usual in the manuals then current. But it was impossible for Milton to handle the dry bones of a divinity compendium without stirring them into life. And divinity which is made to live necessarily becomes unorthodox.

The usual method of the school text-books of the seventeenth century was to exhibit dogma in the artificial terminology of the controversies of the sixteenth century. For this procedure Milton substitutes the words of Scripture simply. The traditional terms of the text-books are retained, but they are employed only as heads under which to arrange the words of Scripture. This process, which in other hands would be little better than index making, becomes here pregnant with meaning. The originality which he voluntarily resigns, in employing only the words of the Bible, he recovers by his freedom of exposition. He shakes himself loose from the trammels of traditional exposition, and looks at the texts for himself. The truth was

> "Left only in those written records pure,
> Though not but by the spirit understood."
>
> *Paradise Lost*, xii. 510.

Upon the points which interested him most closely, Milton knew that his understanding of the text differed from the standard of Protestant orthodoxy. That God created matter, not out of nothing, but out of himself, and that death is, in the course of nature, total extinction of being, though not opinions received, were not singular. More startling is his assertion that polygamy is not, in itself, contrary to morality, though it may be inexpedient. More offensive to the religious sentiment of his day would have been his vigorous vindication of the free-will of man against the reigning Calvinism, and his assertion of the inferiority of the Son in opposition to the received Athanasianism. He labors this point of the nature of God with especial care, showing how greatly it occupied his thoughts. He arranges his texts so as to exhibit in Scriptural language the semi-Arian scheme, *i.e.*, a scheme which, admitting the co-essentiality, denies the eternal generation. Through all this manipulation of texts we seem to see that Milton is not the school logician erecting a consistent fabric of words, but that he is dominated by an imagination peopled with concrete personalities, and laboring to assign their places to the Father and the Son as separate agents in the mundane drama. The *De Doctrina Christiana* is the prose counterpart of *Pæradise Lost* and *Regained*, a caput mortuum of the poems, with every ethereal particle evaporated.

In the royal injunctions of 1614, James I. had ordered students in the universities not to insist too long upon compendiums, but to study the Scriptures, and to bestow their time upon the fathers and councils. In his attempt to express dogmatic theology in the words of Scripture, Milton was unwittingly obeying this injunction. The other part of the royal direction as to fathers and councils it was not in Milton's plan to carry out. Neither, indeed, was it in his power. He had not the necessary learning. M. Scherer says that Milton "laid all antiquity, sacred and profane, under contribution." So far is this from being the case, that while he exhibits in this treatise an intimate knowledge of the text of the canonical books, Hebrew and Greek, there is an absence of that average acquaintance with Christian antiquity which formed the professional outfit of the episcopal divine. Milton's references to the fathers are perfunctory and second-hand. The only citation of Chrysostom, for instance, which I have noticed is in these words: "The same is said to be the opinion of Chrysostom Luther, and other moderns." He did not esteem the judgment of the fathers sufficiently to deem them worth studying. In the interpretation of texts, as in other matters of opinion, Milton withdrew within the fortress of his absolute personality.

I have now to relate the external history of the composition of *Paradise Lost.* When Milton had to skulk for a time in 1660, he was already in steady work upon the poem. Though a few lines of it were composed as early as 1642, it was not till 1658 that he took up the task of composition continuously. If we may trust our only authority (Aubrey-Phillips), he had finished it in 1663, about the time of his marriage. In polishing, rewriting, and writing out fair, much might remain to be done after the poem was, in a way, finished. It is in 1665 that we first make acquaintance with *Paradise Lost* in a complete state. This was the year of the plague, known in our annals as the Great Plague, to distinguish its desolating ravages from former slighter visitations of the epidemic. Every one who could fled from the city of destruction. Milton applied to his young friend Ellwood to find him a shelter. Ellwood, who was then living as tutor in the house of the Penningtons, took a cottage for Milton in their neighborhood, at Chalfont St. Giles, in the county of Bucks. Not only the Penningtons, but General Fleetwood had also his residence near this village; and a report is mentioned by Howitt that it was Fleetwood who provided the ex-secretary with a refuge. The society of neither of these friends was available for Milton. For Fleetwood was a sentenced regicide; and in July Pennington and Ellwood were hurried off to Aylesbury jail by an indefatigable justice of the peace, who was desirous of giving evidence of his zeal for the king's government. That the Chalfont cottage "was not pleasantly situated," must have been indifferent to the blind old man, as much so as that the immediate neighborhood, with its heaths and wooded uplands, reproduced the scenery he had loved when he wrote *L'Allegro.*

As soon as Ellwood was relieved from imprisonment he returned to Chalfont. Then it was that Milton put into his hands the completed *Paradise Lost*, "bidding me take it home with me, and read it at my leisure, and when I had so done return it to him with my judgment thereupon." On returning it, besides giving the author the benefit of his judgment—a judgment not preserved, and not indispensable—the Quaker made his famous speech, "Thou hast said much here of Paradise lost, but what hast thou to say of Paradise found?" Milton afterwards told Ellwood that to this casual question was due his writing *Paradise Regained.* The later poem was included in the original conception, if not in the scheme of the first epic. But we do get from Ellwood's reminiscence a date for the beginning of *Paradise Regained*, which must have been at Chalfont in the autumn of 1665.

When the plague was abated, and the city had become safely habitable, Milton returned to Artillery Row. He had not been long back when London was devastated by a fresh calamity, only less terrible than the plague, because it destroyed the home and not the life. The Great Fire succeeded the Great Plague. Two thirds of the city, 13,000 houses, were reduced to ashes, and the whole current of life and business entirely suspended. Through these two overwhelming disasters Milton must have been supporting his solitary spirit by writing *Paradise Regained*, *Samson Agonistes*, and giving the final touches to *Paradise Lost.* He was now so wholly unmoved by his environment, that we look in vain in the poems for any traces of this season of suffering and disaster. The past and his own meditations were now all in all to him; the horrors of the present were as nothing to a man who had outlived his hopes. Plague and fire, what were they, after the ruin of the noblest of causes? The stoical compression of *Paradise Regained* is in perfect keeping with the fact that it was in the middle of the ruins of London that Milton placed his finished poem in the hands of the licenser,

For licenser there was now, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to wit, for religious literature. Of course, the Primate read by deputy, usually one of his chaplains. The reader into whose hands *Paradise Lost* came, though an Oxford man, and a cleric on his preferment, who had written his pamphlet against the dissenters, happened to be one whose antecedents, as Fellow of All Souls, and Proctor (in 1663), ensured his taking a less pedantic and bigoted view of his duties. Still, though Dryden's dirty plays would have encountered no objection before such a tribunal, the same facilities were not likely to be accorded to anything which bore the name of John Milton, secretary to Oliver, and himself an austere republican. Tomkyns—that was the young chaplain's name—did stumble at a phrase in Book i. 598,

> "With fear of change
> Perplexes monarchs."

There had been in England, and were to be again, times when men had hanged for less than this. Tomkyns, who was sailing on the smooth sea of preferment with a fair wind, did not wish to get into trouble, but at last he let the book pass. Perhaps he thought it was only religious verse written for the sectaries, which would never be heard of at court, or among the wits, and that therefore it was of little consequence what it contained.

A publisher was found, notwithstanding that Paul's, or as it now was, St. Paul's, Churchyard had ceased to exist, in Aldersgate, which lay outside the circuit of the conflagration. The agreement, still preserved in the National Museum, between the author, "John Milton, gent. of the one parte, and Samuel Symons, printer, of the other parte," is among the curiosities of our literary history. The curiosity consists not so much in the illustrious name appended (not in autograph) to the deed, as in the contrast between the present fame of the book, and the waste-paper price at which the copyright is being valued. The author received 5*l.* down; was to receive a second 5*l.* when the first edition should be sold; a third 5*l.* when the second; and a fourth 5*l.* when the third edition should be gone. Milton lived to receive the second 5*l.*, and no more—10*l.* in all, for *Paradise Lost.* I cannot bring myself to join in the lamentations of the biographers over this bargain. Surely it is better so; better to know that the noblest monument of English letters had no money value, than to think of it as having been paid for at a pound the line.

The agreement with Symons is dated 27th April, the entry in the register of Stationers' Hall is 20th August. It was, therefore, in the autumn of 1667 that *Paradise Lost* was in the hands of the public. We have no data for the time occupied in the composition of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes.* We have seen that the former poem was begun at Chalfont in 1665, and it may be conjecturally stated that *Samson* was finished before September, 1667. At any rate, both the poems were published together in the autumn of 1670.

Milton had four years more of life granted him after this publication. But he wrote no more poetry. It was as if he had exhausted his strength in a last effort, in the Promethean agony of Samson, and knew that his hour of inspiration was passed away. But, like all men who have once tasted the joys and pangs of composition, he could not now do without its excitement. The occupation and the indispensable solace of the last ten sad years had been his poems. He would not write more verse, when the æstrus was not on him, but he must write. He took up all the dropped threads of past years, ambitious plans formed in the fulness of vigor, and laid aside, but not abandoned. He was the very opposite of Shelley, who could never look at a piece of his own composition a second time, but when he had thrown it off at a heat, rushed into something else. Milton's adhesiveness was such that he could never give up a design once entered upon. In these four years, as if conscious that his time was now nearly out, he labored to complete five such early undertakings.

(1.) Of his *Compendium of Theology* I have already spoken. He was overtaken by death while preparing this for the press.

(2.) His *History of Britain* must have cost him much labor, bestowed upon comparison of the conflicting authorities. It is the record of the studies he had made for his abandoned epic poem, and is evidence how much the subject occupied his mind.

The *History of Britain*, 1670, had been preceded by (3) a Latin grammar, 1669, and was followed by (4) a Logic on the method of Ramus, 1672.

In 1673 he brought out a new edition of his early volume of *Poems*. In this volume he printed for the first time the sonnets, and other pieces, which had been written in the interval of twenty-seven years since the date of his first edition. Not, indeed, all the sonnets which we now have. Four—in which Fairfax, Vane, Cromwell, and the Commonwealth are spoken of as Milton would speak of them—were necessarily kept back, and not put into print till 1694, by Phillips at the end of his life of his uncle.

In proportion to the trouble which Milton's words cost him, was his care in preserving them. His few Latin letters to his foreign friends are remarkably barren either of fact or sentiment. But Milton liked them well enough to have kept copies of them, and now allowed a publisher, Brabazon Aylmer, to issue them in print, adding to them, with a view to make out a volume, his college exercises, which he had also preserved.

Among the papers which he left at his death, were the beginnings of two undertakings, either of them of overwhelming magnitude, which he did not live to complete. We have seen that he taught his pupils geography out of *Davity*, *Description de l' Univers*. He was not satisfied with this, or with any existing compendium. They were all dry; exact enough with their latitudes and longitudes, but omitted such uninteresting stuff as manners, government, religion, etc. Milton would essay a better system. All he had ever executed was Russia, taking the pains to turn over and extract for his purpose all the best travels in that country. This is the fragment which figures in his works as a *Brief History of Muscovia*.

The hackneyed metaphor of Pegasus harnessed to a luggage trolley will recur to us when we think of the author of *L'Allegro* setting himself to compile a Latin lexicon. If there is any literary drudgery more mechanical than another, it is generally supposed to be that of making a dictionary. Nor had he taken to this industry as a resource in age, when the genial flow of invention had dried up, and original composition had ceased to be in his power. The three folio volumes of MS. which Milton left were the work of his youth; it was a work which the loss of eyesight of necessity put an end to. It is not Milton only, but all students who read with an alert mind, reading to grow, and not to remember, who have felt the want of an occupation which shall fill those hours when mental vigilance is impossible, and vacuity unendurable. Index-making or cataloguing has been the resource of many in such hours. But it was not, I think, as a mere shifting of mental posture that Milton undertook to rewrite Robert Stephens; it was as part of his language training. Only by diligent practice and incessant exercise of attention and care, could Milton have educated his susceptibility to the specific power of words, to the nicety which he attained beyond any other of our poets. Part of this education is recorded in the seemingly withered leaves of his Latin Thesaurus, though the larger part must have been achieved, not by a reflective and critical collection of examples, but by a vital and impassioned reading.

Milton's complaint was what the profession of that day called gout. "He would be very cheerful even in his gout fits, and sing" says Aubrey. This gout returned again and again, and by these repeated attacks wore out his resisting power. He died of the "gout struck in," on Sunday, 8th November, 1674, and was buried, near his father, in the chancel of St. Giles's, Cripplegate. The funeral was attended, Toland says, "by all his learned and great friends in London, not without a friendly concourse of the vulgar." The disgusting profanation of the leaden coffin and dispersion of the poet's bones by the parochial authorities, during the repair of the church in August, 1790, has been denied, but it is to be feared that the fact is too true.

CHAPTER XIII.

PARADISE LOST—PARADISE REGAINED—SAMSON AGONISTES.

"MANY men of forty," it has been said, "are dead poets;" and it might seem that Milton, Latin secretary, and party pamphleteer, had died to poetry about the fatal age. In 1645, when he made a gathering of his early pieces for the volume published by Humphrey Moseley, he wanted three years of forty. That volume contained, besides other things, *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*; then, when produced, as they remain to this day, the finest flower of English poesy. But, though thus like a wary husbandman, garnering his sheaves in presence of the threatening storm, Milton had no intention of bidding farewell to poetry. On the contrary, he regarded this volume only as first-fruits, an earnest of greater things to come.

The ruling idea of Milton's life, and the key to his mental history, is his resolve to produce a great poem. Not that the aspiration in itself is singular, for it is probably shared by every young poet in his turn. As every clever school-boy is destined by himself or his friends to become Lord Chancellor, and every private in the French army carries in his haversack the baton of a marshal, so it is a necessary ingredient of the dream on Parnassus, that it should embody itself in a form of surpassing brilliance. What distinguishes Milton from the crowd of young ambition, "audax juventa," is the constancy of re solve. He not only nourished through manhood the dream of youth, keeping under the importunate instincts which carry off most ambitions in middle life into the pursuit of place, profit, honor—the thorns which spring up and smother the wheat—but carried out his dream in its integrity in old age. He formed himself for this achievement, and for no other. Study at home, travel abroad, the arena of political controversy, the public service, the practice of the domestic virtues. were so many parts of the schooling which was to make a poet.

The reader who has traced with me thus far the course of Milton's mental development will perhaps be ready to believe that this idea had taken entire possession of his mind from a very early age. The earliest written record of it is of date 1632, in Sonnet II. This was written as early as the poet's twenty-third year; and in these lines the resolve is uttered, not as then just conceived, but as one long brooded upon, and its non-fulfilment matter of self-reproach.

If this sonnet stood alone, its relevance to a poetical or even a literary performance might be doubtful. But at the time of its composition it is enclosed in a letter to an unnamed friend, who seems to have been expressing his surprise that the Cambridge B.A. was not settling himself, now that his education was complete, to a profession. Milton's apologetic letter is extant, and was printed by Birch in 1738. It intimates that Milton did not consider his education, for the purposes he had in view, as anything like complete. It is not "the endless delight of speculation," but "a religious advisement how best to undergo; not taking thought of being late, so it give advantage to be more fit." He repudiates the love of learning for its own sake; knowledge is not an end, it is only equipment for performance. There is here no specific engagement as to the nature of the performance. But what it is to be, is suggested by the enclosure of the "Petrarchian stanza" (*i.e.*, the sonnet). This notion that his life was, like Samuel's, a dedicated life, dedicated to a service which required a long probation, recurs again more than once in his writings. It is emphatically repeated, in 1641, in a passage of the pamphlet No. 4:

> "None hath by more studious ways endeavored, and with more unwearied spirit none shall—that I dare almost aver of myself, as far as life and full license will extend. Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapors of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar to touch and purify the life of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous acts and affairs. Till which in some measure be compassed, at mine own peril and cost, I refuse not to sustain this expectation, from as many as are not loth to hazard so much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them."

In 1638, at the age of nine and twenty, Milton has already determined that this life-work shall be a poem, an epic poem, and that its subject shall probably be the Arthurian legend.

> "Si quando indigenas revocabo in carmina reges,
> Arturumque etiam sub terris bella moventem,
> Aut dicam invictæ sociali fœdere mensæ
> Magnanimos heroas, et, o modo spiritus adsit!
> Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub marte phalangas."

> "May I find such a friend . . . . when, if ever, I shall revive in song our native princes, and among them Arthur moving to the fray even in the nether world, and when I will, if only God's spirit aid me, break the Saxon bands before our Britons' prowess."

The same announcement is reproduced in the *Epitaphium Damonis*, 1639, and in Pamphlet No. 4, in the often-quoted words:

> "Perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory, composed at under twenty, or thereabout, met with acceptance, . . . I began to assent to them (the Italians) and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grows daily upon me, that by labor and intent study, which I take to be my portion in this life, joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die."

Between the publication of the collected *Poems* in 1645, and the appearance of *Paradise Lost* in 1667, a period of twenty-seven years, Milton gave no public sign of redeeming this pledge. He seemed to his contemporaries to have renounced the follies of his youth, the gewgaws of verse, and to have sobered down into the useful citizen. "Le bon poëte," thought Malherbe, "n'est pas plus utile à l'état qu'un bon joueur de quilles." Milton had postponed his poem, in 1641, till "the land had once enfranchised herself from this impertinent yoke of prelatry, under whose inquisitorious and tyrannical duncery no free and splendid wit can flourish." Prelatry was swept away, and he asked for further remand on account of the war. Peace was concluded, the country was settled under the strong government of a Protector, and Milton's great work did not appear. It was not even preparing. He was writing not poetry but prose, and that most ephemeral and valueless kind of prose, pamphlets, extempore articles on the topics of the day. He poured out reams of them, in simple unconsciousness that they had no influence whatever on the current of events.

Nor was it that, during these five-and-twenty years, Milton was meditating in secret what he could not bring forward in public; that he was only holding back from publishing, because there was no public ready to listen to his song. In these years Milton was neither writing nor thinking poetry. Of the twenty-four sonnets, indeed—twenty-four, reckoning the twenty-lined piece, "The forcers of conscience," as a sonnet—eleven belong to this period. But they do not form a continuous series, such as do Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, nor do they evince a sustained mood of poetical meditation. On the contrary, their very force and beauty consist in their being the momentary and spontaneous explosion of an emotion welling up from the depths of the soul, and forcing itself into metrical expression, as it were, in spite of the writer. While the first eight sonnets, written before 1645, are sonnets of reminiscence and intention, like those of the Italians, or the ordinary English sonnet, the eleven sonnets of Milton's silent period—from 1645 to 1658—are records of present feeling kindled by actual facts. In their naked, unadorned simplicity of language, they may easily seem, to a reader fresh from Petrarch, to be homely and prosaic. Place them in relation to the circumstance on which each piece turns, and we begin to feel the superiority for poetic effect of real emotion over emotion meditated and revived. History has in it that which can touch us more abidingly than any fiction. It is this actuality which distinguishes the sonnets of Milton from any other sonnets. Of this difference Wordsworth was conscious when he struck out the phrase, "In his hand the *thing became* a trump." Macaulay compared the sonnets in their majestic severity to the collects. They remind us of a Hebrew psalm, with its undisguised outrush of rage, revenge, exultation, or despair, where nothing is due to art or artifice, and whose poetry is the expression of the heart, and not a branch of literature. It is in the sonnets we most realize the force of Wordsworth's image—

> 'Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea.'

We are not then to look in the sonnets for latent traces of the suspended poetic creation. They come from the other side of Milton's nature, the political, not the artistic. They are akin to the prose pamphlets, not to *Paradise Lost*. Just when the sonnets end, the composition of the epic was taken in hand. The last of the sonnets (23 in the ordinary numeration) was written in 1658; and it was to the same year that our authority, Aubrey-Phillips, refers his beginning to occupy himself with *Paradise Lost*. He had by this time settled the two points about which he had been long in doubt, the subject and the form. Long before bringing himself to the point of composition, he had decided upon the fall of man as subject, and upon the narrative, or epic, form, in preference to the dramatic. It is even possible that a few isolated passages of the poem, as it now stands, may have been written before. Of one such passage we have Aubrey's assurance that it was written fifteen or sixteen years before 1658, and while he was still contemplating a drama. The lines are Satan's speech, *P. L.* iv. 32, beginning—

> "O, thou that with surpassing glory crowned."

These lines, Phillips says, his uncle recited to him, as forming the opening of his tragedy. They are modelled, as the classical reader will perceive, upon Euripides. Possibly they were not intended for the very first lines, since if Milton intended to follow the practice of his model, the lofty lyrical tone of this address should have been introduced by a prosaic matter-of-fact setting forth of the situation, as in the Euripidean prologue. There are other passages in the poem which have the air of being insitious in the place where they stand. The lines in Book iv., now in question, may reasonably be referred to 1640–42, the date of those leaves in the Trinity College MS. in which Milton has written down, with his own hand, various sketches of tragedies, which might possibly be adopted as his final choice.

A passage in *The Reason of Church Government*, written at the same period, 1641, gives us the fullest account of his hesitation. It was a hesitation caused partly by the wealth of matter which his reading suggested to him, partly by the consciousness that he ought not to begin in haste while each year was ripening his powers. Every one who has undertaken a work of any length has made the experience that the faculty of composition will not work with ease until the reason is satisfied that the subject chosen is a congenial one. Gibbon has told us himself of many periods of history upon which he tried his pen, even after the memorable 15th October, 1764, when he "sate musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter." We know how many sketches of possible tragedies Racine would make before he could adopt one as the appropriate theme, on which he could work with tha tthorough enjoyment of the labor which is necessary to give life and verve to any creation, whether of the poet or the orator.

The leaves of the Trinity College MS., which are contemporary with his confidence to the readers of his tract *Of Church Government*, exhibit a list of nearly one hundred subjects, which had occurred to him from time to time as practicable subjects. From the mode of entry we see that, already in 1641, a scriptural was likely to have the preference over a profane subject, and that among scriptural subjects *Paradise Lost* (the familiar title appears in this early note) stands out prominently above the next. The historical subjects are all taken from native history, none are foreign, and all from the time before the Roman conquest. The scriptural subjects are partly from the Old, partly from the New, Testament. Some of these subjects are named and nothing more, while others are slightly sketched out. Among these latter are *Baptistes*, on the death of John the Baptist; and *Christus Patiens*, apparently to be confined to the agony in the garden. Of *Paradise Lost* there are four drafts in greater detail than any of the others. These drafts of the plot or action, though none of them that which was finally adopted, are sufficiently near to the action of the poem as it stands, to reveal to us the fact that the author's imaginative conception of what he intended to produce was generated, cast, and moulded at a comparatively early age. The commonly received notion, therefore, with which authors, as they age, are wont to comfort themselves, that one of the greatest feats of original invention achieved by man was begun after fifty, must be thus far modified. *Paradise Lost* was *composed* after fifty, but was *conceived* at thirty-two. Hence the high degree of perfection realized in the total result. For there were combined to produce it the opposite virtues of two distinct periods of mental development—the daring imagination and fresh emotional play of early manhood, with the exercised judgment and chastened taste of ripened years. We have regarded the twenty-five years of Milton's life between 1641 and the commencement of *Paradise Lost* as time ill laid out upon inferior work which any one could do, and which was not worth doing by any one. Yet it may be made a question if in any other mode than by adjournment of his early design, Milton could have attained to that union of original strength with severe restraint, which distinguishes from all other poetry, except that of Virgil, the three great poems of his old age. If the fatigue of age is sometimes felt in *Paradise Regained*, we fell in *Paradise Lost* only (in the words of Chateaubriand), "la maturité de l'âge à travers les passions des legères années; une charme extraordinaire de vieillesse et de jeunesse."

A still further inference is warranted by the Trinity College jottings of 1641. Not the critics merely, but readers ready to sympathize, have been sometimes inclined to wish that Milton had devoted his power to a more human subject, in which the poet's invention could have had freer play, and for which his reader's interest could have been more ready. And it has been thought that the choice of a Biblical subject indicates the narrowing effect of age, adversity, and blindness combined. We now know that the Fall was the theme, if not determined on, at least predominant in Milton's thoughts, at the age of thirty-two. His ripened judgment only approved a selection made in earlier years, and in days full of hope. That in selecting a scriptural subject he was not in fact exercising any choice, but was determined by his circumstances, is only what must be said of all choosing. With all his originality, Milton was still a man of his age. A Puritan poet, in a Puritan environment, could not have done otherwise. But even had choice been in his power, it is doubtful if he would have had the same success with a subject taken from history.

First, looking at his public. He was to write in English. This, which had at one time been matter of doubt, had at an early stage come to be his decision. Nor had the choice of English been made for the sake of popularity, which he despised. He did not desire to write for the many, but for the few. But he was enthusiastically patriotic. He had entire contempt for the shouts of the mob, but the English nation, as embodied in the persons of the wise and good, he honored and reverenced with all the depth of his nature. It was for the sake of his nation that he was to devote his life to a work which was to ennoble her tongue among the languages of Europe.

He was then to write in English, for the English, not popularly but nationally. This resolution at once limited his subject. He who aspires to be the poet of a nation is bound to adopt a hero who is already dear to that people, to choose a subject and characters which are already familiar to them. This is no rule of literary art arbitrarily enacted by the critics; it is a dictate of reason, and has been the practice of all the great national poets. The more obvious examples will occur to every reader. But it may be observed that even the Greek tragedians, who addressed a more limited audience than the epic poets, took their plots from the best known legends touching the fortunes of the royal houses of the Hellenic race. Now to the English reader of the seventeenth century—and the same holds good to this day—there were only two cycles of persons and events sufficiently known beforehand to admit of being assumed by a poet. He must go either to the Bible or to the annals of England. Thus far Milton's choice of subject was limited by the consideration of the public for whom he wrote.

Secondly, he was still farther restricted by a condition which the nature of his own intelligence imposed upon himself. It was necessary for Milton that the events and personages, which were to arouse and detain his interests, should be real events and personages. The mere play of fancy with the pretty aspects of things could not satisfy him; he wanted to feel beneath him a substantial world of reality. He had not the dramatist's imagination which can body forth fictitious characters with such life-like reality that it can and does itself believe in their existence. Macaulay has truly said that Milton's genius is lyrical, not dramatic. His lyre will only echo real emotion, and his imagination is only stirred by real circumstances. In his youth he had been within the fascination of the romances of chivalry, as well in their original form as in the reproductions of Ariosto and Spenser, While under this influence, he had thought of seeking his subject among the heroes of these lays of old minstrelsy. And as one of his principles was that his hero must be a national hero, it was of course upon the Arthurian cycle that his aspiration fixed. When he did so, he no doubt believed at least the historical existence of Arthur. As soon, however, as he came to understand the fabulous basis of the Arthurian legend, it became unfitted for his use. In the Trinity College MS. of 1641, Arthur has already disappeared from the list of possible subjects—a list which contains thirty-eight suggestions of names from British or Saxon history, such as Vortigern, Edward the Confessor, Harold, Macbeth, etc. While he demanded the basis of reality for his personages, with a true instinct he at the same time rejected all that fell within the period of well-ascertained history. He made the Conquest the lower limit of his choice. In this negative decision against historical romance we recognize Milton's judgment, and his correct estimate of his own powers. Those who have been thought to succeed best in engrafting fiction upon history, Shakespere or Walter Scott, have been eminently human poets, and have achieved their measure of success by investing some well-known name with the attributes of ordinary humanity such as we all know it. This was precisely what Milton could not have done. He had none of that sympathy with which Shakespere embraced all natural and common affections of his brother men. Milton, burning as he did with a consuming fire of passion, and yearning for rapt communion with select souls, had withal an aloofness from ordinary men and women, and a pound disdain of commonplace joy and sorrow, which has led hasty biographers and critics to represent him as hard, austere—an iron man of iron mould. This want of interest in common life disqualified him for the task of revivifying historic scenes.

Milton's mental constitution, then, demanded, in the material upon which it was to work, a combination of qualities such as very few subjects could offer. The events and personages must be real and substantial, for he could not occupy himself seriously with airy nothings and creatures of pure fancy. Yet they must not be such events and personages as history had portrayed to us with well-known characters, and all their virtues, faults, foibles, and peculiarities. And, lastly, it was requisite that they should be the common property and the familiar interest of a wide circle of English readers.

These being the conditions required in this subject, it is obvious that no choice was left to the poet in the England of the seventeeth century but a biblical subject. And among the many picuresque episodes which the Hebrew Scriptures present, the narrative of the Fall stands out with a character of all-embracing comprehensiveness which belongs to no other single event in the Jewish annals. The first section of the Book of Genesis clothes in a dramatic form the dogmatic idea from which was developed in the course of the ages the whole scheme of Judaico-Christian anthropology. In this world-drama, Heaven above and Hell beneath, the powers of light and those of darkness are both brought upon the scene in conflict with each other, over the fate of the inhabitants of our globe—a minute ball of matter suspended between two infinities. This gigantic and unmanagable material is so completely mastered by the poet's imagination, that we are made to fell at one and the same time the petty dimensions of our earth in comparison with primordial space and almighty power, and the profound import to us of the issue depending on the conflict. Other poets, of inferior powers, have from time to time attempted, with different degrees of success, some of the minor Scriptural histories: Bodmer, the Noachian Deluge; Solomon Gessner, the Death of Abel, etc. And Milton himself, after he had spent his full strength upon his greater theme, recurred in *Samson Agonistes* to one such episode, which he had deliberately set aside before, as not giving verge enough for the sweep of his soaring conception.

These considerations duly weighed, it will be found that the subject of the Fall of Man was not so much Milton's choice as his necessity. Among all the traditions of the people of the earth, there is not extant another story which could have been adequate to his demands. Biographers may have been somewhat misled by his speaking of himself as "long choosing and beginning late." He did not beging till 1658, when he was already fifty, and it has been somewhat hastily inferred that he did not choose till the date at which he began. But, as we have seen, he had already chosen at least as early as 1642, when the plan of a drama on the subject, and under the title of *Paradise Lost*, was fully developed. In the interval between 1642 and 1658, he changed the form from a drama to an epic, but his choice remained unaltered. And as the address to the sun (*Paradise Lost*, iv. 32) was composed at the earlier of these dates, it appears that he had already formulated even the rhythm and cadence of the poem that was to be.

I have said that this subject of the Fall was Milton's necessity, being the only subject which his mind, "in the spacious circuits of her musing," found large enough. But as it was no abrupt or arbitrary choice, so it was not forced upon him from without, in the way in which the *Deeds of the Roman People* (*Gesta Populi Romani*) were forced upon the reluctant Virgil. We must again remind ourselves that Milton had a Calvinistic bringing up. And Calvinism in pious Puritan souls of that fervent age was not the attenuated creed of the eighteenth century, the Calvinism which went not beyond the personal gratification of safety for myself, and for the rest damnation. When Milton was being reared, Calvinism was not old and effete, a mere doctrine. It was a living system of thought, and one which carried the mind upwards towards the Eternal will, rather than downwards towards my personal security. Keble has said of the old Catholic views, founded on sacramental symbolism, that they are more poetical than any others in the church. But it must be acknowledged that a predestinarian scheme, leading the cogitatiou upwards to dwell upon "the heavenly things before the foundation of the world," opens a conception and poetical framework with which none other in the whole cycle of human thought can compare. Not election and reprobation as set out in the petty chicanery of Calvin's *Institutes*, but the prescience of absolute wisdom revolving all the possibilities of time, space, and matter. Poetry has been defined as "the suggestion of noble grounds for the noble emotions," and, in this respect, none of the world-epics—there are at most five such in existence—can compete with *Paradise Lost*. The melancholy pathos of Lucretius, indeed, pierces the heart with a two-edged sword more keen than Milton's, but the compass of Lucretius' horizon is much less, being limited to this earth and its inhabitants. The horizon of *Paradise Lost* is not narrower than all space, its chronology not shorter than eternity; the globe of our earth a mere spot in the physical universe, and that universe itself a drop suspended in the infinite empyrean. His aspiration had thus reached "one of the highest arcs that human contemplation circling upwards can make from the glassy sea whereon she stands" (*Doctr. and Disc.*). Like his contemporary Pascal, his mind had beaten her wings against the prison walls of human thought.

The vastness of the scheme of *Paradise Lost* may become more apparent to us if we remark that, within its embrace, there seems to be equal place for both the systems of physical astronomy which were current in the seventeenth century. In England, about the time *Paradise Lost* was being written, the Copernican theory, which placed the sun in the centre of our system, was already the established belief of the few well-informed. The old Ptolemaic or Alphonsine system, which explained the phenomena on the hypothesis of nine (or ten) transparent hollow spheres wheeling round the stationary earth, was still the received astronomy of ordinary people. These two beliefs, the one based on science, though still wanting the calculation which Newton was to supply to make it demonstrative, the other supported by the tradition of ages, were, at the time we speak of, in presence of each other in the public mind. They are in presence of each other also in Milton's epic. And the systems confront each other in the poem, in much the same relative position which they occupy in the mind of the public. The ordinary, habitual mode of speaking of celestial phenomena is Ptolemaic (see *Paradise Lost*, vii. 339; iii. 481). The conscious, or doctrinal, exposition of the same phenomena is Copernican (see *Paradise Lost*, viii. 122). Sharp as is the contrast between the two systems, the one being the direct contradictory of the other, they are lodged together, not harmonized, within the vast circuit of the poet's imagination. The precise mechanism of an object so little as is our world in comparison with the immense totality may be justly disregarded. "De minimis non curat poeta." In the universe of being the difference between a heliocentric and a geocentric theory of our solar system is of as small moment as the reconcilement of fixed fate, free-will foreknowledge absolute is in the realm of absolute intelligence. The one is the frivolous pastime of devils; the other the Great Architect

> "Hath left to their disputes, perhaps to move
> His laughter at their quaint opinions wide."

As one, and the principal, inconsistency in Milton's presentment of his matter has now been mentioned, a general remark may be made upon the conceptual incongruities in *Paradise Lost*. The poem abounds in such, and the critics, from Addison downwards, have busied themselves in finding out more and more of them. Milton's geography of the world is as obscure and untenable as that of Herodotus. The notes of time cannot stand together. To give an example: Eve says *Paradise Lost*, iv. 449)—

> "That day I oft remember, when from sleep
> I first awak'd."

But in the chronology of the poem, Adam himself, whose creation preceded that of Eve, was but three days old at the time this reminiscence is repeated to him. The mode in which the Son of God is spoken of is not either consistent Athanasianism or consistent Arianism. Above all, there is an incessant confusion of material and immaterial in the acts ascribed to the angels. Dr. Johnson, who wished for consistency, would have had it preserved "by keeping immateriality out of sight." And a general arraignment has been laid against Milton of a vagueness and looseness of imagery, which contrasts unfavorably with the vivid and precise details of other poets—of Homer or of Dante, for example.

Now, first, it must be said that Milton is not one of the poets of inaccurate imagination. He could never, like Scott, have let the precise picture of the swan on "still Saint Mary's lake" slip into the namby-pamby "sweet Saint Mary's lake." When he intends a picture, he is unmistakably distinct; his outline is firm and hard. But he is not often intending pictures. He is not, like Dante, always seeing—he is mostly thinking in a dream, or as Coleridge best expressed it, he is not a picturesque but a musical poet. The pictures in *Paradise Lost* are like the paintings on the walls of some noble hall—only part of the total magnificence. He did not aim at that finish of minute parts in which each bit fits into every other. For it was only in this way that the theme he had chosen could be handled at all. The impression of vastness, the sense that everything, as Bishop Butler says, "runs up into infininity," would have been impaired if he had drawn attention to the details of his figures. Had he had upon his canvas only a single human incident, with ordinary human agents, he would have known, as well as other far inferior artists, how to secure perfection of illusion by exactness of detail. But he had undertaken to present, not the world of human experience, but a supernatural world, peopled by supernatural beings, God and his Son, angels and archangels, devils; a world in which Sin and Death may be personified without palpable absurdity. Even his one human pair are exceptional beings, from whom we are prepared not to demand conformity to the laws of life which now prevail in our world. Had he presented all these spiritual personages in definite form to the eye, the result would have been degradation. We should have had the ridiculous instead of the sublime, as in the scene of the *Iliad*, where Diomede wounds Aphrodite in the hand, and sends her crying home to her father. Once or twice Milton has ventured too near the limit of material adaptation, trying to explain *how* angelic natures subsist, as in the passage (*Paradise Lost*, v. 405) where Raphael tells Adam that angels eat and digest food like man. Taste here receives a shock, because the incongruity, which before was latent, is forced upon our attention. We are threatened with being transported out of the conventional world of Heaven, Hell, Chaos, and Paradise, to which we had well adapted ourselves, into the real world in which we know that such beings could not breathe and move.

For the world of *Paradise Lost* is an ideal, conventional world, quite as much as the world of the *Arabian Nights*, or the world of the chivalrous romance, or that of the pastoral novel. Not only dramatic but all poetry is founded on illusion. We must, though it be but for the moment, suppose it true. We must be transported out of the actual world into that world in which the given scene is laid. It is chiefly the business of the poet to effect this transportation, but the reader (or hearer) must aid. "Willst du Dichter ganz verstehen, musst in Dichter's Lande gehen." If the reader's imagination is not active enough to assist the poet, he must at least not resist him. When we are once inside the poet's heaven, our critical faculty may justly require that what takes place there shall be consistent with itself, with the laws of that fantastic world. But we may not begin by objecting that it is impossible that such a world should exist. If, in any age, the power of imagination is enfeebled, the reader becomes more unable to make this effort; he ceases to co-operate with the poet. Much of the criticism which we meet with on *Paradise Lost* resolves itself into a refusal on the part of the critic to make that initial abandonment to the conditions which the poet demands; a determination to insist that his heaven, peopled with deities, dominations, principalities, and powers, shall have the same material laws which govern our planetary system. It is not, as we often hear it said, that the critical faculty is unduly developed in the nineteenth century. It is that the imaginative faculty fails us; and when that is the case, criticism is powerless—it has no fundamental assumption upon which its judgments can proceed.

It is the triumph of Milton's skill to have made his ideal world actual, if not to every English mind's eye, yet to a larger number than have ever been reached by any other poetry in our language. Popular (in the common use of the word) Milton has not been, and cannot be. But the world he created has taken possession of the public mind. Huxley complains that the false cosmogony, which will not yield to the conclusions of scientific research, is derived from the seventh book of *Paradise Lost*, rather than from Genesis. This success Milton owes partly to his selection of his subject, partly to his skill in handling it. In his handling he presents his spiritual existences with just so much relief as to endow them with life and personality, and not with that visual distinctness which would at once reveal their spectral immateriality, and so give a shock to the illusion. We might almost say of his personages that they are shapes, "if shape it might be called that shape had none." By his art of suggestion by association, he does all he can to aid us to realize his agents, and at the moment when distinctness would disturb, he withdraws the object into a mist, and so disguises the incongruities which he could not avoid. The tact that avoids difficulties inherent in the nature of things is an art which gets the least appreciation either in life or in literature. But if we would have some measure of the skill which in *Paradise Lost* has made impossible beings possible to the imagination, we may find it in contrasting them with the incarnated abstraction and spirit voices, which we encounter at every turn in Shelley, creatures who leave behind them no more distinct impression than that we have been in a dream peopled with ghosts. Shelley, too,

> " Voyag'd th' unreal, vast, unbounded deep
> Of horrible confusion."—*Paradise Lost*, x. 470,

and left it the chaos which he found it. Milton has elicited from similar elements a conception so life-like that his poetical version has inseparably grafted itself upon, if it has not taken the place of, the historical narrative of the original creation.

So much Milton has effected by his skilful treatment. But the illusion was greatly facilitated by his choice of subject. He had not to create his supernatural personages, they were already there. The Father and the Son, the Angels, Satan, Baal and Moloch, Adam and Eve, were in full possession of the popular imagination, and more familiar to it than any other set of known names. Nor was the belief accorded to them a half belief, a bare admission of their possible existence, such as prevails at other times or in some countries, In the England of Milton, the angels and devils of the Jewish Scriptures were more real beings, and better vouched than any historical personages could be. The old chronicles were full of lies, but this was Bible truth. There might very likely have been a Henry VIII., and he might have been such as he is described, but at any rate he was dead and gone, while Satan still lived and walked the earth, the identical Satan who had deceived Eve.

Nor was it only to the poetic public that his personages were real, true, and living beings. The poet himself believes as entirely in their existence as did his readers. I insist upon this point, because one of the first of living critics has declared of *Paradise Lost* that it is a poem in which every artifice of invention is consciously employed, not a single fact being, for an instant, conceived as tenable by any living faith. (Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, p. 138.) On the contrary, we shall not rightly apprehend either the poetry or the character of the poet until we feel that throughout *Paradise Lost*, as in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson*, Milton felt himself to be standing on the sure ground of fact and reality. It was not in Milton's nature to be a showman, parading before an audience a phantasmagoria of spirits, which he himself knew to be puppets tricked up for the entertainment of an idle hour. We are told by Lockhart, that the old man who told the story of Gilpin Horner to Lady Dalkeith *bonâ fide* believed the existence of the elf. Lady Dalkeith repeated the tale to Walter Scott, who worked it up with consummate skill into the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. This is a case of a really believed legend of diablerie becoming the source of a literary fiction. Scott neither believed in the reality of the goblin page himself, nor expected his readers to believe it. He could not rise beyond the poetry of amusement, and no poetry with only this motive can ever be more than literary art.

Other than this was Milton's conception of his own function. Of the fashionable verse, such as was written in the Caroline age, or in any age, he disapproved, not only because it was imperfect art, but because it was untrue utterance. Poems that were raised "from the heat of youth, or the vapors of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar encomiast, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite," were in his eyes treachery to the poet's high vocation.

> "Poetical powers 'are the inspired gift of God rarely bestowed . . . in every nation, and are of power, beside the office of a pulpit, to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbation of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ; to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship.' "

So he had written in 1642, and this lofty faith in his calling supported him twenty years later, in the arduous labor of his attempt to realize his own ideal. In setting himself down to compose *Paradise Lost* and *Regained*, he regarded himself not as an author, but as a medium, the mouth-piece of "that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and all knowledge: Urania, heavenly muse," visits him nightly,

> "And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires
> Easy my unpremeditated verse."—*Paradise Lost*, ix. 24.

Urania bestows the flowing words and musical sweetness; to God's Spirit he looks to

> "Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight."—*Paradise Lost*, iii. 50.

The singers with whom he would fain equal himself are not Dante, or Tasso, or, as Dryden would have it, Spenser, but

> "Blind Thamyris, and blind Mœonides,
> And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old."

As he is equalled with these in misfortune—loss of sight—he would emulate them in function. Orpheus and Musæus are the poets he would fain have as the companions of his midnight meditation (*Penseroso*). And the function of the poet is like those of the prophet in the old dispensation, not to invent, but to utter. It is God's truth which passes his lips—lips hallowed by the touch of sacred fire. He is the passive instrument through whom flowed the emanation from on high; his words were not his own, but a suggestion. Even for style he was indebted to his "celestial patroness who deigns her nightly visitation unimplor'd."

Milton was not dependent upon a dubious tradition in the subject he had selected. Man's fall and recovery were recorded in the Scriptures. And the two media of truth, the internal and the external, as deriving from the same source, must needs be in harmony. That the Spirit enlightens the mind within, in this belief the Puritan saint, the poet, and the prophet, who all met in Milton, were at one. That the old Testament Scriptures were also a revelation from God, was an article of faith which he had never questioned. Nor did he only receive these books as conveying in substance a divine view of the world's history, he regarded them as in the letter a transcript of fact.

If the poet-prophet would tell the story of creation or redemption, he is thus restrained not only by the general outline and imagery of the Bible, but by its very words. And here we must note the skill of the poet in surmounting an added or artificial difficulty, in the subject he had chosen as combined with his notion of inspiration. He must not deviate in a single syllable from the words of the Hebrew books. He must take up into his poem the whole of the sacred narrative. This he must do, not merely because his readers would expect such literal accuracy from him, but because to himself that narrative was the very truth which he was undertaking to deliver. The additions which his fancy or inspiration might supply must be restrained by this severe law, they should be such as to aid the reader's imagination to conceive how the event took place. They must by no means be suffered to alter, disfigure, traduce the substance or the letter of the revelation. This is what Milton has done. He has told the story of creation in the very words of Scripture. The whole of the seventh book is little more than a paraphrase of a few verses of Genesis. What he has added is so little incongruous with his original, that most English men and women would probably have some difficulty in discriminating in recollection the part they derive from Moses, from that which they have added from the paraphrast. In Genesis it is the serpent who tempts Eve, in virtue of his natural wiliness. In Milton it is Satan who has entered into the body of a serpent, and supplied the intelligence. Here, indeed, Milton was only adopting a gloss, as ancient at least as the Book of Wisdom (ii. 24). But it is the gloss, and not the text of Moses, which is in possession of our minds, and who has done most to lodge it there, Milton or the commentators? Again, it is Milton and not Moses who makes the serpent pluck and eat the first apple from the tree. But Bp. Wilson comments upon the words of Genesis (iii. 6) as though they contained this purely Miltonic circumstance.

It could hardly but be that one or two of the incidents which Milton has supplied, the popular imagination has been unable to homologate. Such an incident is the placing of artillery in the wars in heaven. We reject this suggestion, and find it mars probability. But it would not seem so improbable to Milton's contemporaries, not only because it was an article of the received poetic tradition (see *Ronsard*, 6, p. 40), as because fire-arms had not quite ceased to be regarded as a devilish enginery of a new warfare, unfair in the knightly code of honor, a base substitute of mechanism for individual valor. It was gunpowder and not *Don Quixote* which had destroyed the age of chivalry.

Another of Milton's fictions which has been found too grotesque is the change (*P. L.*, x. 508) of the demons into serpents, who hiss their Prince on his return from his embassy. Here it is not, I think, so much the unnatural character of the incident itself, as its gratuitousness, which offends. It does not help us to conceive the situation. A suggestion of Chateaubriand may, therefore, go some way towards reconciling the reader even to this caprice of imagination. It indicates, he says, the degradation of Satan, who, from the superb Intelligence of the early scenes of the poem, is become at its close a hideous reptile. He has not triumphed, but has failed, and is degraded into the old dragon, who haunts among the damned. The bruising of his head has already commenced.

The bridge, again, which Sin and Death construct (*Paradise Lost*, x. 300), leading from the mouth of hell to the wall of the world, has a chilling effect upon the imagination of a modern reader. It does not assist the conception of the cosmical system which we accept in the earlier books. This clumsy fiction seems more at home in the grotesque and lawless mythology of the Turks, or in the Persian poet Sadi, who is said by Marmontel to have adopted it from the Turk. If Milton's intention were to reproduce Jacob's ladder, he should, like Dante (*Parad.* xxi. 25), have made it the means of communication between heaven and earth.

It is possible that Milton himself, after the experiment of *Paradise Lost* was fully before him, suspected that he had supplemented too much for his purpose; that his imagery, which was designed to illustrate history, might stand in its light. For in the composition of *Paradise Regained* (published 1671) he has adopted a much severer style. In this poem he has not only curbed his imagination, but has almost suppressed it. He has amplified, but has hardly introduced any circumstance which is not in the original. *Paradise Regained* is little more than a paraphrase of the Temptation as found in the synoptical gospels. It is a marvel of ingenuity that more than two thousand lines of blank verse can have been constructed out of some twenty lines of prose, without the addition of any invented incident, or the insertion of any irrelevant digression. In the first three books of *Paradise Regained* there is not a single simile. Nor yet can it be said that the version of the gospel narrative has the fault of most paraphrases, viz., that of weakening the effect, and obliterating the chiselled features of the original. Let a reader take *Paradise Regained* not as a theme used as a canvas for poetical embroidery, an opportunity for an author to show off his powers of writing, but as a *bonâ* *fide* attempt to impress upon the mind the story of the Temptation, and he will acknowledge the concealed art of the genuine epic poet, bent before all things upon telling his tale. It will still be capable of being alleged that the story told does not interest; that the composition is dry, hard, barren; the style as of set purpose divested of the attributes of poetry. It is not necessary, indeed, that an epic should be in twelve books; but we do demand in an epic poem multiplicity of character and variety of incident. In *Paradise Regained* there are only two personages, both of whom are supernatural. Indeed, they can scarcely be called personages; the poet, in his fidelity to the letter, not having thought fit to open up the fertile vein of delineation which was afforded by the human character of Christ. The speakers are no more than the abstract principles of good and evil, two voices who hold a rhetorical disputation through four books and two thousand lines.

The usual explanation of the frigidity of *Paradise Regained* is the suggestion, which is nearest at hand, viz., that it is the effect of age. Like Ben Jonson's *New Inn*, it betrays the feebleness of senility, and has one of the most certain marks of that stage of authorship, the attempt to imitate himself in those points in which he was once strong. "When glad no more, He wears a face of joy, because He has been glad of yore." Or it is an "œuvre de lassitude," a continuation, with the inevitable defect of continuations, that of preserving the forms and wanting the soul of the original, like the second parts of *Faust*, of *Don Quixote*, and so many other books.

Both these explanations of the inferiority of *Paradise Regained* have probability. Either of them may be true, or both may have concurred to the common effect. In favor of the hypothesis of senility is the fact, recorded by Phillips, that Milton "could not hear with patience any such thing when related to him." The reader will please to note that this is the original statement, which the critics have improved into the statement that he preferred *Paradise Regained* to *Paradise Lost*. But his approval of his work, even if it did not amount to preference, looks like the old man's fondness for his youngest and weakest offspring.

Another view of the matter, however, is at least possible. Milton's theory as to the true mode of handling a biblical subject was, as I have said, to add no more dressing, or adventitious circumstance, than should assist the conception of the sacred verity. After he had executed *Paradise Lost*, the suspicion arose that he had been too indulgent to his imagination; that he had created too much. He would make a second experiment, in which he would enforce his theory with more vigor. In the composition of *Paradise Lost* he must have experienced that the constraint he imposed upon himself had generated, as was said of Racine, "a plenitude of soul." He might infer that, were the compression carried still further, the reaction of the spirit might be still increased. Poetry, he had said long before, should be "simple, sensuous, impassioned" (*Tractate of Education*). Nothing enhances passion like simplicity. So in *Paradise Regained* Milton has carried simplicity of dress to the verge of nakedness. It is probably the most unadorned poem extant in any language. He has pushed severe abstinence to the extreme point, possibly beyond the point, where a reader's power is stimulated by the poet's parsimony.

It may elucidate the intention of the author of *Paradise Regained*, if we contrast it for a moment with a poem constructed upon the opposite principle, that, viz., of the maximum of adornment. Claudian's *Rape of Proserpine* (A.D. 400) is one of the most rich and elaborate poems ever written. It has in common with Milton the circumstance that its whole action is contained in a solitary event, viz., the carrying off of Proserpine from the vale of Henna by Pluto. All the personages, too, are superhuman, and the incident itself supernatural. Claudian's ambition was to overlay his story with the gold and jewelry of expression and invention. Nothing is named without being carved, decked and colored from the inexhaustible resources of the poet's treasury. This is not done with ostentatious pomp, like the hyperbolical heroes of vulgar novelists, but always with taste, which though lavish is discriminating.

Milton, like Wordsworth, urged his theory of parsimony further in practice than he would have done had he not been possessed by a spirit of protest against prevailing error. Milton's own ideal was the chiselled austerity of Greek tragedy. But he was impelled to overdo the system of holding back, by his desire to challenge the evil spirit which was abroad. He would separate himself not only from the Clevelands, the Denhams, and the Drydens, whom he did not account as poets at all, but even from the Spenserians. Thus, instead of severe he became rigid, and his plainness is not unfrequently jejune.

"Pomp and ostentation of reading," he had once written, "is admired among the vulgar; but, in matters of religion, he is learnedest who is plainest." As Wordsworth had attempted to regenerate poetry by recurring to nature and to common objects, Milton would revert to the pure Word of God. He would present no human adumbration of goodness, but Christ himself. He saw that here absolute plainness was best. In the presence of this unique Being, silence alone became the poet. This "higher argument" was "sufficient of itself" (*Paradise Lost*, ix. 42).

There are some painters whose work appeals only to painters, and not to the public. So the judgment of poets and critics has been more favorable to *Paradise Regained* than the opinion of the average reader. Johnson thinks that "if it had been written, not by Milton, but by some imitators, it would receive universal praise." Wordsworth thought it "the most perfect in execution of anything written by Milton." And Coleridge says of it, "In its kind it is the most perfect poem extant."

There is a school of critics which maintains that a poem is, like a statue or a picture, a work of pure art, of which beauty is the only characteristic of which the reader should be cognizant. And beauty is wholly ideal, an absolute quality, out of relation to person, time, or circumstance. To such readers *Samson Agonistes* will seem tame, flat, meaningless, and artificial. From the point of view of the critic of the eighteenth century, it is "a tragedy which only ignorance would admire and bigotry applaud" (Dr. Johnson). If, on the other hand, it be read as a page of contemporary history, it becomes human, pregnant with real woe, the record of an heroic soul, not baffled by temporary adversity, but totally defeated by an irreversible fate, and unflinchingly accepting the situation, in the firm conviction of the righteousness of the cause. If fiction is truer than fact, fact is more tragic than fiction. In the course of the long struggle of human liberty against the church, there had been many terrible catastrophes. But the St. Bartholomew, the Revocation of the Edict, the Spanish Inquisition, Alva in the Low Countries—these and other days of suffering and rebuke have been left to the dull pen of the annalist, who has variously diluted their story in his literary circumlocution office. The triumphant royalist reaction of 1660, when the old serpent bruised the heel of freedom by totally crushing Puritanism, is singular in this, that the agonized cry of the beaten party has been preserved in a contemporary monument, the intensest utterance of the most intense of English poets—the *Samson Agonistes*.

In the covert representation, which we have in this drama, of the actual wreck of Milton, his party, and his cause, is supplied that real basis of truth which was necessary to inspire him to write. It is of little moment that the incidents of Samson's life do not form a strict parallel to those of Milton's life, or to the career of the Puritan cause. The resemblance lies in the sentiment and situation, not in the bare event. The glorious youth of the consecrated deliverer, his signal overthrow of the Philistine foe with means so inadequate that the hand of God was manifest in the victory; his final humiliation, which he owed to his own weakness and disobedience, and the present revelry and feasting of the uncircumcised Philistines in the temple of their idol—all these things together constitute a parable of which no reader of Milton's day could possibly mistake the interpretation. More obscurely adumbrated is the day of vengeance when virtue should return to the repentant backslider, and the idolatrous crew should be smitten with a swift destruction in the midst of their insolent revelry. Add to these the two great personal misfortunes of the poet's life, his first marriage with a Philistine woman, out of sympathy with him or his cause, and his blindness; and the basis of reality becomes so complete, that the nominal personages of the drama almost disappear behind the history which we read through them.

But while for the biographer of Milton *Samson Agonistes* is charged with a pathos which as the expression of real suffering no fictive tragedy can equal, it must be felt that as a composition the drama is languid, nerveless, occasionally halting, never brilliant. If the date of the composition of the *Samson* be 1663, this may have been the result of weariness after the effort of *Paradise Lost.* If this drama were composed in 1667, it would be the author's last poetical effort, and the natural explanation would then be that his power over language was failing. The power of metaphor, *i.e.*, of indirect expression, is, according to Aristotle, the characteristic of genius. It springs from vividness of conception of the thing spoken of. It is evident that this intense action of the presentative faculty is no longer at the disposal of the writer of *Samson.* In *Paradise Regained* we are conscious of a purposed restraint of strength. The simplicity of its style is an experiment, an essay of a new theory of poetic words. The simplicity of *Samson Agonistes* is a flagging of the forces, a drying up of the rich sources from which had once flowed the golden stream of suggestive phrase which makes *Paradise Lost* a unique monument of the English language. I could almost fancy that the consciousness of decay utters itself in the lines (594)—

> "I feel my genial spirits droop,
> My hopes all flat, nature within me seems
> In all her functions weary of herself,
> My race of glory run, and race of shame,
> And I shall shortly be with them that rest."

The point of view I have insisted on is that Milton conceives a poet to be one who employs his imagination to make a revelation of truth, truth which the poet himself entirely believes. One objection to this point of view will at once occur to the reader—the habitual employment in both poems of the fictions of pagan mythology. This is an objection as old as Miltonic criticism. The objection came from those readers who had no difficulty in realizing the biblical scenes, or in accepting demoniac agency, but who found their imagination repelled by the introduction of the gods of Greece or Rome. It is not that the biblical heaven and the Greek Olympus are incongruous, but it is the unreal blended with the real, in a way to destroy credibility.

To this objection the answer has been supplied by De Quincey. To Milton the personages of the heathen Pantheon were not merely familiar fictions, or established poetical properties; they were evil spirits. This was the received creed of the early interpreters. In their demonology, the Hebrew and the Greek poets had a common ground. Up to the advent of Christ, the fallen angels had been permitted to delude mankind. To Milton, as to Jerome, Moloch was Mars, and Chemosh Priapus. Plato knew of hell as Tartarus, and the battle of the giants in Hesiod is no fiction, but an obscured tradition of the war once waged in heaven. What has been adverse to Milton's art of illusion is, that the belief that the gods of the heathen world were the rebellious angels has ceased to be part of the common creed of Christendom. Milton was nearly the last of our great writers who was fully possessed of the doctrine. His readers now no longer share it with the poet. In Addison's time (1712) some of the imaginary persons in *Paradise Lost* were beginning to make greater demands upon the faith of readers than those cool rationalistic times could meet.

There is an element of decay and death in poems which we vainly style immortal. Some of the sources of Milton's power are already in process of drying up. I do not speak of the ordinary caducity of language, in virtue of which every effusion of the human spirit is lodged in a body of death. Milton suffers little as yet from this cause There are few lines in his poems which are less intelligible now than they were at the time they were written. This is partly to be ascribed to his limited vocabulary, Milton, in his verse, using not more than eight thousand words, or about half the number used by Shakespere. Nay, the position of our earlier writers has been improved by the mere spread of the English language over a wider area. Addison apologized for *Paradise Lost* falling short of the *Æneid*, because of the inferiority of the language in which it was written. "So divine a poem in English is like a stately palace built of brick." The defects of English for purposes of rhythm and harmony are as great now as they ever were, but the space that our speech fills in the world is vastly increased, and this increase of consideration is reflected back upon our older writers.

But if, as a treasury of poetic speech, *Paradise Lost* has gained by time, it has lost far more as a storehouse of divine truth. We at this day are better able than ever to appreciate its force of expression, its grace of phrase, its harmony of rhythmical movement, but it is losing its hold over our imagination. Strange to say, this failure of vital power in the constitution of the poem is due to the very selection of subject by which Milton sought to secure perpetuity. Not content with being the poet of men, and with describing human passions and ordinary events. he aspired to present the destiny of the whole race of mankind, to tell the story of creation, and to reveal the councils of heaven and hell. And he would raise this structure upon no unstable base, but upon the sure foundation of the written word. It would have been a thing incredible to Milton that the hold of the Jewish Scriptures over the imagination of English men and women could ever be weakened This process, however, has already commenced. The demonology of the poem has already, with educated readers, passed from the region of fact into that of fiction. Not so universally, but with a large number of readers, the angelology can be no more than what the critics call machinery. And it requires a violent effort from any of our day to accommodate our conceptions to the anthropomorphic theology of *Paradise Lost.* Were the sapping process to continue at the same rate for two more centuries, the possibility of epic illusion would be lost to the whole scheme and economy of the poem. Milton has taken a scheme of life for life itself. Had he, in the choice of subject, remembered the principle of the Aristotelean Poetic (which he otherwise highly prized), that men in action are the poet's proper theme, he would have raised his imaginative fabric on a more permanent foundation; upon the appetites, passions, and emotions of men, their vices and virtues, their aims and ambitions, which are a far more constant quantity than any theological system. This, perhaps, was what Goethe meant when he pronounced the subject of *Paradise Lost* to be "abominable. with a fair outside, but rotten inwardly."

Whatever fortune may be in store for *Paradise Lost* in the time to come, Milton's choice of subject was, at the time he wrote, the only one which offered him the guarantees of reality, authenticity, and divine truth which he required. We need not, therefore, search the annals of literature to find the poem which may have given the first suggestion of the fall of man as a subject. This, however, has been done by curious antiquaries, and a list of more than two dozen authors has been made, from one or other of whom Milton may have taken either the general idea or particular hints for single incidents. Milton, without being a very wide reader, was likely to have seen the *Adamus Exul* of Grotius (1601), and he certainly had read Giles Fletcher's *Christ's Victory and Triumph* (1610). There are traces of verbal reminiscence of Sylvester's translation of *Du Bartas*. But out of the long catalogue of his predecessors there appear only three who can claim to have conceived the same theme with anything like the same breadth, or on the same scale as Milton has done. These are the so-called Cædmon, Andreini, and Vondel.

1. The anonymous Anglo-Saxon poem which passes under the name of Cædmon has this one point of resemblance to the plot of *Paradise Lost*, that in it the seduction of Eve is Satan's revenge for his expulsion from heaven. As Francis Junius was much occupied upon this poem, of which he published the text in 1655, it is likely enough that he should have talked of it with his friend Milton.

2. Voltaire related that Milton during his tour in Italy (1638) had seen performed *L'Adamo*, a sacred drama by the Florentine Giovanni Battista Andreini, and that he "took from that ridiculous trifle" the hint of the "noblest product of human imagination." Though Voltaire relates this as a matter of fact, it is doubtful if it be more than an *on dit* which he had picked up in London society. Voltaire could not have seen Andreini's drama, for it is not at all a ridiculous trifle. Though much of the dialogue is as insipid as dialogue in operettas usually is, there is great invention in the plot, and animation in the action. Andreini is incessantly offending against taste, and is infected with the vice of the Marinists, the pursuit of *concetti*, or far fetched analogies between things unlike. His infernal personages are grotesque and disgusting, rather than terrible; his scenes in heaven childish—at once familiar and fantastic, in the style of the Mysteries of the age before the drama. With all these faults the *Adamo* is a lively and spirited representation of the Hebrew legend, and not unworthy to have been the antecedent of *Paradise Lost*. There is no question of

plagiarism, for the resemblance is not even that of imitation or parentage, or adoption. The utmost that can be conceded is to concur in Hayley's opinion that, either in representation or in perusal, the *Adamo* of Andreini had made an impression on the mind of Milton; had, as Voltaire says, revealed to him the hidden majesty of the subject. There had been at least three editions of the *Adamo* by 1641, and Milton may have brought one of these with him among the books which he had shipped from Venice, even if he had not seen the drama on the Italian stage, or had not, as Todd suggests, met Andreini in person.

So much appears to me to be certain from the internal evidence of the two compositions as they stand. But there are further some slight corroborative circumstances. (i.) The Trinity College sketch, so often referred to, of Milton's scheme, when it was intended to be dramatic, keeps much more closely, both in its personages and in its ordering, to Andreini. (ii.) In Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum*, a compilation in which he had his uncle's help, Andreini is mentioned as author "of a fantastic poem entitled Olivastro, which was printed at Bologna, 1642." If Andreini was known to Edward Phillips, the inference is that he was known to Milton.

3. Lastly, though external evidence is here wanting, it cannot be doubted that Milton was acquainted with the *Lucifer* of the Dutch poet, Joost van den Vondel, which appeared in 1654. This poem is a regular five-act drama in the Dutch language, a language which Milton was able to read. In spite of commercial rivalry and naval war there was much intercourse between the two republics, and Amsterdam books came in regular course to London. The Dutch drama turns entirely on the revolt of the angels, and their expulsion from heaven, the fall of man being but a subordinate incident. In *Paradise Lost* the relation of the two events is inverted, the fall of the angels being there an episode, not transacted, but told by one of the personages of the epic. It is, therefore, only in one book of *Paradise Lost*, the sixth, that the influence of Vondel can be looked for. There may possibly occur in other parts of our epic single lines of which an original may be found in Vondel's drama. Notably such a one is the often-quoted—

> "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."
> *Paradise Lost*, i. 263;

which is Vondel's—

> "En liever d'eerste Vorst in eenigh lager hof
> Dan in't gezalight licht de tweede, of noch een minder!"

But it is in the sixth book only in which anything more than a verbal similarity is traceable. According to Mr. Gosse, who has given an analysis, with some translated extracts, of Vondel's *Lucifer*, the resemblances are too close and too numerous to be mere coincidences. Vondel is more human than Milton, just where human attributes are unnatural, so that heaven is made to seem like earth, while in

Paradise Lost we always feel that we are in a region aloft. Miltonic presentation has a dignity and elevation, which is not only wanting but is sadly missed in the Dutch drama, even the language of which seems common and familiar.

The poems now mentioned form, taken together, the antecedents of *Paradise Lost.* In no one instance, taken singly, is the relation of Milton to a predecessor that of imitation, not even to the extent in which the *Æneid*, for instance, is an imitation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* The originality of Milton lies not in his subject, but in his manner; not in his thoughts, but in his mode of thinking. His story and his personages, their acts and words, had been the common property of all poets since the fall of the Roman Empire. Not only the three I have specially named had boldly attempted to set forth a mythical representation of the origin of evil, but many others had fluttered round the same central object of poetic attraction. Many of these productions Milton had read, and they had made their due impression on his mind according to their degree of force. When he began to compose *Paradise Lost* he had the reading of a lifetime behind him. His imagination worked upon an accumulated store, to which books, observation, and reflection had contributed in equal proportions. He drew upon this store without conscious distinction of its sources. Not that this was a recollected material, to which the poet had recourse whenever invention failed him; it was identified with himself. His verse flowed from his own soul, but it was a soul which had grown up nourished with the spoil of all the ages. He created his epic, as metaphysicians have said that God created the world, by drawing it out of himself, not by building it up out of elements supplied *ab extra.*

The resemblances to earlier poets—Greek, Latin, Italian—which could be pointed out in *Paradise Lost*, were so numerous that in 1695, only twenty-one years after Milton's death, an editor, one Patrick Hume, a school-master in the neighborhood of London, was employed by Tonson to point out the imitations in an annotated edition. From that time downwards, the diligence of our literary antiquaries has been busily employed in the same track of research, and it has been extended to the English poets, a field which was overlooked, or not known to the first collector. The result is a valuable accumulation of parallel passages, which have been swept up into our *variorum* Miltons, and make *Paradise Lost*, for English phraseology, what Virgil was for Latin in the middle ages, the centre round which the study moves. The learner who desires to cultivate his feeling for the fine shades and variations of expression has here a rich opportunity, and will acknowledge with gratitude the laborious services of Newton, Pearce, the Wartons, Todd, Mitford, and other compilers. But these heaped-up citations of parallel passages somewhat tend to hide from us the secret of Miltonic language. We are apt to think that the magical effect of Milton's words has been produced by painfully inlaying tesseræ of borrowed metaphor—a mosaic of bits culled from extensive reading, carried along by a retentive memory, and pieced together so as to produce a new whole, with the exquisite art of a Japanese cabinet-maker. It is sometimes admitted that Milton was a plagiary, but it is urged in extenuation that his plagiarisms were always reproduced in finer forms.

It is not in the spirit of vindicating Milton, but as touching the mystery of metrical language, that I stay a few moments upon this misconception. It is true that Milton has a way of making his own even what he borrows. While Horace's thefts from Alcæus or Pindar are palpable, even from the care which he takes to Latinize them, Milton cannot help transfusing his own nature into the words he adopts. But this is far from all. When Milton's widow was asked "if he did not often read Homer and Virgil, she understood it as an imputation upon him for stealing from those authors, and answered, with eagerness, that he stole from nobody but the muse who inspired him." This is more true than she knew. It is true there are many phrases or images in *Paradise Lost* taken from earlier writers—taken, not stolen, for the borrowing is done openly. When Adam, for instance, begs Raphael to prolong his discourse deep into night,

> "Sleep, listening to thee, will watch;
> Or we can bide his absence, till thy song
> End, and dismiss thee ere the morning shine;"

we cannot be mistaken in saying that we have here a conscious reminiscence of the words of Alcinous to Ulysses in the eleventh book of the Odyssey. Such imitation is on the surface, and does not touch the core of that mysterious combination of traditive with original elements in diction, which Milton and Virgil, alone of poets known to us, have effected. Here and there, many times, in detached places, Milton has consciously imitated. But, beyond this obvious indebtedness, there runs through the whole texture of his verse a suggestion of secondary meaning, a meaning which has been accreted to the words, by their passage down the consecrated stream of classical poetry. Milton quotes very little for a man of much reading. He says of himself (*Judgment of Bucer*) that he "never could delight in long citations, much less in whole traductions, whether it be natural disposition or education in me, or that my mother bore me a speaker of what God made mine own, and not a translator." And the observation is as old as Bishop Newton, that "there is scarce any author who has written so much, and upon such various subjects, and yet quotes so little from his contemporary authors." It is said that "he could repeat Homer almost all without book." But we know that common minds are apt to explain to themselves the working of mental superiority by exaggerating the power of memory. Milton's own writings remain a sufficient evidence that his was not a verbal memory. And, psychologically, the power of imagination and the power of verbal memory are almost always found in inverse proportion.

Milton's diction is the elaborated outcome of all the best words of all antecedent poetry, not by a process of recollected reading and storage, but by the same mental habit by which we learn to speak our mother-tongue. Only, in the case of the poet, the vocabulary acquired has a new meaning superadded to the words, from the occasion on which they have been previously employed by others. Words, over and above their dictionary signification, connote all the feeling which has gathered round them by reason of their employment through a hundred generations of song. In the words of Mr. Myers, "without ceasing to be a logical step in the argument, a phrase becomes a centre of emotional force. The complex associations which it evokes, modify the associations evoked by other words in the same passage, in a way distinct from logical or grammatical connection." The poet suggests much more than he says, or, as Milton himself has phrased it, "more is meant than meets the ear."

For the purposes of poetry a thought is the representative of many feelings, and a word is the representative of many thoughts. A single word may thus set in motion in us the vibration of a feeling first consigned to letters 3000 years ago. For oratory words should be winged, that they may do their work of persuasion. For poetry words should be freighted with associations of feeling, that they may awaken sympathy. It is the suggestive power of words that the poet cares for, rather than their current denotation. How laughable are the attempts of the commentators to interpret a line in Virgil as they would a sentence in Aristotle's *Physics!* Milton's secret lies in his mastery over the rich treasure of this inherited vocabulary. He wielded it as his own, as a second mother-tongue, the native and habitual idiom of his thought and feeling, backed by a massive frame of character, and "a power which is got within me to a passion." (*Areopagitica.*)

When Wordsworth came forward at the end of the eighteenth century with his famous reform of the language of English poetry, the Miltonic diction was the current coin paid out by every versifier. Wordsworth revolted against this dialect as unmeaning, hollow, gaudy, and inane. His reform consisted in dropping the consecrated phraseology altogether, and reverting to the common language of ordinary life. It was necessary to do this in order to reconnect poetry with the sympathies of men, and make it again a true utterance, instead of the ingenious exercise in putting together words which it had become. In projecting this abandonment of the received tradition, it may be thought that Wordsworth was condemning the Miltonic system of expression in itself. But this was not so. Milton's language had become, in the hands of the imitators of the eighteenth century, sound without sense, a husk without the kernel, a body of words without the soul of poetry. Milton had created and wielded an instrument which was beyond the control of any less than himself. He wrote it as a living language; the poetasters of the eighteenth century wrote it as a dead language, as boys make Latin verses. Their poetry is to *Paradise Lost* as a modern Gothic restoration is to a genuine middle-age church. It was against the feeble race of imitators, and not against the master himself, that the protest of the lake-poet was raised. He proposed to do away with the Miltonic vocabulary altogether, not because it was in itself vicious, but because it could now only be employed at second-hand.

One drawback there was attendant upon the style chosen by Milton, viz., that it narrowly limited the circle of his readers. All words are addressed to those who understand them. The Welsh triads are not for those who have not learnt Welsh; an English poem is only for those who understand English. But of understanding English there are many degrees; it requires some education to understand literary style at all. A large majority of the natives of any country possess, and use, only a small fraction of their mother-tongue. These people may be left out of the discussion. Confining ourselves only to that small part of our millions which we speak of as the educated classes—that is, those whose schooling is carried on beyond fourteen years of age—it will be found that only a small fraction of the men, and a still smaller fraction of the women, fully apprehend the meaning of words. This is the case with what is written in the ordinary language of books. When we pass from a style in which words have only their simple signification, to a style of which the effect depends on the suggestion of collateral association, we leave behind the majority even of these few. This is what is meant by the standing charge against Milton that he is too learned.

It is no paradox to say that Milton was not a learned man. Such men there were in his day—Usher, Selden, Voss, in England; in Holland, Milton's adversary Salmasius, and many more. A learned man was one who could range freely and surely over the whole of classical and patristic remains in the Greek and Latin languages (at least), with the accumulated stores of philological, chronological, historical criticism necessary for the interpretation of those remains. Milton had neither made these acquisitions nor aimed at them. He even expresses himself, in his vehement way, with contempt of them. "Hollow antiquities sold by the seeming bulk," "marginal stuffings," "horse-loads of citations and fathers," are some of his petulant outbursts against the learning that had been played upon his position by his adversaries. He says expressly that he had "not read the Councils, save here and there" (*Smectymnuus*). His own practice had been "industrious and select reading." He chose to make himself a scholar rather than a learned man. The aim of his studies was to improve faculty, not to acquire knowledge. "Who would be a poet must himself be a true poem;" his heart should "contain of just, wise, good, the perfect shape." He devoted himself to self-preparation with the assiduity of Petrarch or of Goethe. "In wearisome labor and studious watchings I have tired out almost a whole youth." "Labor and intense study I take to be my portion in this life." He would know, not all, but "what was of use to know," and form himself by assiduous culture. The first Englishman of whom the designation of our series, *Men of Letters*, is appropriate, Milton was also the noblest example of the type. He cultivated, not letters, but himself, and sought to enter into possession of his own mental kingdom, not that he might reign there, but that he might royally use its resources in building up a work which should bring honor to his country and his native tongue.

The style of *Paradise Lost* is then only the natural expression of a soul thus exquisitely nourished upon the best thoughts and finest words of all ages. It is the language of one who lives in the companionship of the great and the wise of past time. It is inevitable that when such a one speaks, his tones, his accent, the melodies of his rhythm, the inner harmonies of his linked thoughts, the grace of his allusive touch, should escape the common ear. To follow Milton one should at least have tasted the same training through which he put himself. "Te quoque dignum finge deo." The many cannot see it, and complain that the poet is too learned. They would have Milton talk like Bunyan or William Cobbett, whom they understand. Milton did attempt the demagogue in his pamphlets, only with the result of blemishing his fame and degrading his genius. The best poetry is that which calls upon us to rise to it, not that which writes down to us.

Milton knew that his was not the road to popularity. He thirsted for renown, but he did not confound renown with vogue. A poet has his choice between the many and the few; Milton chose the few. "Paucis hujusmodi lectoribus contentus," is his own inscription in a copy of his pamphlets sent by him to Patrick Young. He derived a stern satisfaction from the reprobation with which the vulgar visited him. His divorce tracts were addressed to men who dared to think, and ran the town "numbering good intellects." His poems he wished laid up in the Bodleian Library, "where the jabber of common people cannot penetrate, and whence the base throng of readers keep aloof" (*Ode to Rouse*). If Milton resembled a Roman republican in the severe and stoic elevation of his character, he also shared the aristocratic intellectualism of the classical type. He is in marked contrast to the levelling hatred of excellence, the Christian trades-unionism of the model Catholic of the mould of S. François de Sales, whose maxim of life is "marchons avec la troupe de nos frères et compagnons, doucement, paisiblement, et aimablement." To Milton the people are—

> "But a herd confus'd,
> A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
> Things vulgar."—*Paradise Regained*, iii. 49.

At times his indignation carries him past the courtesies of equal speech, to pour out the vials of prophetic rebuke, when he contemplates the hopeless struggle of those who are the salt of the earth, "amidst the throng and noises of vulgar and irrational men" (*Tenure of Kings*), and he rates them to their face as "owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs" (*Sonnet* XII.); not because they will not listen to him, but because they "hate learning more than toad or asp" (*Sonnet* IX.).

Milton's attitude must be distinguished from patrician pride, or the *noli-me-tangere* of social exclusiveness. Nor, again, was it, like Callimachus's, the fastidious repulsion of a delicate taste for the hackneyed in literary expression; it was the lofty disdain of aspiring virtue for the sordid and ignoble.

Various ingredients, constitutional or circumstantial, concurred to produce this repellent or unsympathetic attitude in Milton. His dogmatic Calvinism, from the effects of which his mind never recovered —a system which easily disposes to a cynical abasement of our fellow-men—counted for something. Something must be set down to habitual converse with the classics—a converse which tends to impart to character, as Platner said of Godfrey Hermann, "a certain grandeur and generosity, removed from the spirit of cabal and mean cunning which prevail among men of the world." His blindness threw him out of the competition of life, and back upon himself, in a way which was sure to foster egotism. These were constitutional elements of that aloofness from men which characterized all his utterance. These disposing causes became inexorable fate, when, by the turn of the political wheel of fortune, he found himself alone amid the mindless dissipation and reckless materialism of the Restoration. He must have felt himself then, "Miltonus contra mundum," at war with human society as constituted around him, and driven to withdraw himself within a poetic world of his own creation.

In this antagonism of the poet to his age much was lost; much energy was consumed in what was mere friction. The artist is then most powerful when he finds himself in accord with the age he lives in. The plenitude of art is only reached when it marches with the sentiments which possess a community. The defiant attitude easily slides into paradox, and the mind falls in love with its own wilfulness. The exceptional emergence of Milton's three poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Regained*, and *Samson*, deeply colors their context. The greatest achievement of art in their kinds have been the capital specimens of a large crop; as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the picked lines out of many rhapsodies, and Shakespere the king of an army of contemporary dramatists. Milton was a survival, felt himself such, and resented it.

"Unchang'd,
. . . . . Though fall'n on evil days,
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;
In darkness, and with dangers compass'd round,
And solitude."—*Paradise Lost*, vii. 24.

Poetry thus generated, we should naturally expect to meet with more admiration than sympathy. And such, on the whole, has been Milton's reception. In 1678, twenty years after the publication of *Paradise Lost*, Prior spoke of him (*Hind Transversed*) as "a rough, unhewn fellow, that a man must sweat to read him." And in 1842, Hallam had doubts "if *Paradise Lost*, published eleven years since, would have met with a greater demand" than it did at first. It has been much disputed by historians of our literature what inference is to be drawn from the numbers sold of *Paradise Lost* at its first publication. Between 1667 and 1688, a space of twenty years, three editions had been printed, making together some 4500 copies. Was this a large or a small circulation? Opinions are at variance on the point. Johnson and Hallam thought it a large sale, as books went at that time. Campbell, and the majority of our annalists of books, have considered it as evidence of neglect. Comparison with what is known of other cases of circulation leads to no more certain conclusion. On the one hand, the public could not take more than three editions—say 3000 copies—of the plays of Shakespere in sixty years, from 1623 to 1684. If this were a fair measure of possible circulation at the time, we should have to pronounce Milton's sale a great success. On the other hand, Cleveland's poems ran through sixteen or seventeen editions in about thirty years. If this were the average output of a popular book, the inference would be that *Paradise Lost* was not such a book.

Whatever conclusion may be the true one from the amount of the public demand, we cannot be wrong in asserting that from the first, and now as then, *Paradise Lost* has been more admired than read. The poet's wish and expectation that he should find "fit audience, though few," has been fulfilled. Partly this has been due to his limitation, his unsympathetic disposition, the deficiency of the human element in his imagination, and his presentation of mythical instead of real beings. But it is also in part a tribute to his excellence, and is to be ascribed to the lofty strain which requires more effort to accompany than an average reader is able to make, a majestic demeanor which no parodist has been able to degrade, and a wealth of allusion demanding more literature than is possessed by any but the few whose life is lived with the poets. An appreciation of Milton is the last reward of consummated scholarship; and we may apply to him what Quintilian has said of Cicero, "Ille se profecisse sciat, cui Cicero valde placebit."

Causes other than the inherent faults of the poem long continued to weigh down the reputation of *Paradise Lost.* In Great Britain the sense for art, poetry, literature, is confined to a few, while our political life has been diffused and vigorous. Hence all judgment, even upon a poet, is biassed by considerations of party. Before 1688 it was impossible that the poet, who had justified regicide, could have any public beyond the suppressed and crouching Nonconformists. The Revolution of 1688 removed this ban, and from that date forward the Liberal party in England adopted Milton as the Republican poet. William Hogg, writing in 1690, says of *Paradise Lost* that "the fame of the poem is spread through the whole of England, but being written in English, it is as yet unknown in foreign lands." This is obvious exaggeration. Lauder, about 1748, gives the date exactly, when he speaks of "that infinite tribute of veneration that has been paid to him *these sixty years past.*" One distinguished exception there was. Dryden, royalist and Catholic though he was, was loyal to his art. Nothing which Dryden ever wrote is so creditable to his taste as his being able to say, and daring to confess, in the day of disesteem, that the regicide poet alone deserved the honor which his contemporaries were for rendering to himself. Dryden's saying, "This man cuts us all out, and the ancients, too," is not perfectly well vouched, but it would hardly have been invented if it had not been known to express his sentiments. And Dryden's sense of Milton's greatness grew with his taste. When, in the preface to his *State of Innocence* (1674), Dryden praised *Paradise Lost*, he "knew not half the extent of its excellence," John Dennis says, "as more than twenty years afterwards he confessed to me." Had he known it, he never could have produced his vulgar parody, *The State of Innocence*, a piece upon which he received the compliments of his contemporaries, as "having refined the ore of Milton."

With the one exception of Dryden, a better critic than poet, Milton's repute was the work of the Whigs. The first *édition de luxe* of *Paradise Lost* (1688) was brought out by a subscription got up by the Whig leader, Lord Somers. In this edition Dryden's pinchbeck epigram, so often quoted, first appeared,—

"Three poets in three distant ages born," etc.

It was the Whig essayist, Addison, whose papers in the *Spectator* (1712) did most to make the poem popularly known. In 1737, in the height of the Whig ascendancy, the bust of Milton penetrated Westminster Abbey, though, in the generation before, the Dean of that day had refused to admit an inscription on the monument erected to John Phillips, because the name of Milton occurred in it.

The zeal of the Liberal party in the propagation of the cult of Milton was of course encountered by an equal passion on the part of the Tory opposition. They were exasperated by the lustre which was reflected upon Revolution principles by the name of Milton. About the middle of the eighteenth century, when Whig popularity was already beginning to wane, a desperate attempt was made by a rising Tory pamphleteer to crush the new Liberal idol. Dr. Johnson, the most vigorous writer of the day, conspired with one William Lauder, a native of Scotland seeking fortune in London, to stamp out Milton's credit by proving him to be a wholesale plagiarist. Milton's imitations—he had gathered pearls wherever they were to be found—were thus to be turned into an indictment against him. One of the beauties of *Paradise Lost* is, as has been already said, the scholar's flavor of literary reminiscence which hangs about its words and images. This Virgilian art, in which Milton has surpassed his master, was represented by this pair of literary bandits as theft, and held to prove at once moral obliquity and intellectual feebleness. This line of criticism was well chosen; it was, in fact, an appeal to the many from the few. Unluckily for the plot, Lauder was not satisfied with the amount of resemblance shown by real parallel passages. He ventured upon the bold step of forging verses, closely resembling lines in *Paradise Lost*, and ascribing these verses to older poets. He even made forged verses as quotations from *Paradise Lost*, and showed them as Milton's plagiarisms from preceding writers. Even these clumsy fictions might have passed without detection at that uncritical period of our literature, and under the shelter of the name of Samuel Johnson. But Lauder's impudence grew with the success of his criticisms, which he brought out as letters, through a series of years, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. There was a translation of *Paradise Lost* into Latin hexameters, which had been made in 1690 by one William Hogg. Lauder inserted lines, taken from this translation, into passages taken from Massenius, Staphorstius, Taubmannus, neo-Latin poets, whom Milton had, or might have read, and presented these passages as thefts by Milton.

Low as learning had sunk in England in 1750, Hogg's Latin *Paradisus amissus* was just the book which tutors of colleges who could teach Latin verses had often in their hands. Mr. Bowle, a tutor of Oriel College, Oxford, immediately recognized an old acquaintance in one or two of the interpolated lines. This put him upon the scent; he submitted Lauder's passages to a closer investigation, and the whole fraud was exposed. Johnson, who was not concerned in the cheat, and was only guilty of indolence and party spirit, saved himself by sacrificing his comrade. He afterwards took ample revenge for the mortification of this exposure in his *Lives of the Poets*, in which he employed all his vigorous powers and consummate skill to write down Milton. He undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow at the poet's reputation, and succeeded in damaging it for at least two generations of readers. He did for Milton what Aristophanes did for Socrates, effaced the real man, and replaced him by a distorted and degrading caricature.

It was again a clergyman to whom Milton owed his vindication from Lauder's onslaught. John Douglas, afterwards bishop of Salisbury, brought Bowle's materials before the public. But the high Anglican section of English life has never thoroughly accepted Milton. R. S. Hawker, vicar of Morwenstow, himself a poet of real feeling, gave expression, in rabid abuse of Milton, to the antipathy which more judicious churchmen suppress. Even the calm and gentle author of the *Christian Year*, wide heart ill-sorted with a narrow creed, deliberately framed a theory of Poetic for the express purpose, as it would seem, of excluding the author of *Paradise Lost* from the first class of poets.

But a work such as Milton has constructed, at once intense and elaborate, firmly knit and broadly laid, can afford to wait. Time is all in its favor, and against its detractors. The Church never forgives, and faction does not die out. But Milton has been for two centuries getting beyond the reach of party, whether as friends or as foes. In each national aggregate an instinct is always at work, an instinct not equal to exact discrimination of lesser degrees of merit, but surely finding out the chief forces which have found expression in the native tongue. This instinct is not an active faculty, and so exposed to the influences which warp the will; it is a passive deposition from unconscious impression. Our appreciation of our poet is not to be measured by our choosing him for our favorite closet companion, or reading him often. As Voltaire wittily said of Dante, "Sa reputation s'affirmera toujours, parce qu'on ne le lit guère." We shall prefer to read the fashionable novelist of each season as it passes, but we shall choose to be represented at the international congress of world poets by Shakespere and Milton; Shakespere first, and next MILTON.

COWPER.

BY

GOLDWIN SMITH.

COWPER.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE.

Cowper is the most important English poet of the period between Pope and the illustrious group headed by Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, which arose out of the intellectual ferment of the European Revolution. As a reformer of poetry, who called it back from conventionality to nature, and at the same time as the teacher of a new school of sentiment which acted as a solvent upon the existing moral and social system, he may perhaps himself be numbered among the precursors of the Revolution, though he was certainly the mildest of them all. As a sentimentalist he presents a faint analogy to Rousseau, whom in natural temperament he somewhat resembled. He was also the great poet of the religious revival which marked the latter part of the eighteenth century in England, and which was called Evangelicism within the establishment, and Methodism without. In this way he is associated with Wesley and Whitefield, as well as with the philanthropists of the movement, such as Wilberforce, Thornton, and Clarkson. As a poet he touches, on different sides of his character, Goldsmith, Crabbe, and Burns. With Goldsmith and Crabbe he shares the honor of improving English taste in the sense of truthfulness and simplicity. To Burns he felt his affinity, across a gulf of social circumstance, and in spite of a dialect not yet made fashionable by Scott. Besides his poetry, he holds a high, perhaps the highest place among English letter-writers; and the collection of his letters appended to Southey's biography forms, with the biographical portions of his poetry, the materials for a sketch of his life. Southey's biography itself is very helpful, though too prolix and too much filled out with dissertations for common readers. Had its author only done for Cowper what he did for Nelson!*

William Cowper came of the Whig nobility of the robe. His great-uncle, after whom he was named, was the Whig Lord Chancellor of Anne and George I. His grandfather was that Spenser Cowper, judge of the Common Pleas, for love of whom the pretty Quakeress drowned herself, and who, by the rancor of party, was indicted for her murder. His father, the Rev. John Cowper, D.D., was chaplain to George II. His mother was a Donne, of the race of the poet, and descended by several lines from Henry III. A Whig and a gentleman he was by birth, a Whig and a gentleman he remained to the end. He was born on the 15th November (old style), 1731, in his father's rectory of Berkhampstead. From nature he received, with a large measure of the gifts of genius, a still larger measure of its painful sensibilities. In his portrait by Romney the brow bespeaks intellect, the features feeling and refinement, the eye madness. The stronger parts of character, the combative and propelling forces, he evidently lacked from the beginning. For the battle of life he was totally unfit. His judgment in its healthy state was, even on practical questions, sound enough, as his letters abundantly prove; but his sensibility not only rendered him incapable of wrestling with a rough world, but kept him always on the verge of madness, and frequently plunged him into it. To the malady which threw him out of active life we owe not the meanest of English poets.

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* Our acknowledgments are also due to Mr. Benham, the writer of the Memoir prefixed to the Globe Edition of Cowper.

At the age of thirty-two, writing of himself, he says, "I am of a very singular temper, and very unlike all the men that I have ever conversed with. Certainly I am not an absolute fool, but I have more weakness than the greatest of all the fools I can recollect at present. In short, if I was as fit for the next world as I am unfit for this—and God forbid I should speak it in vanity—I would not change conditions with any saint in Christendom." Folly produces nothing good, and if Cowper had been an absolute fool, he would not have written good poetry. But he does not exaggerate his own weakness, and that he should have become a power among men is a remarkable triumph of the influences which have given birth to Christian civilization.

The world into which the child came was one very adverse to him, and at the same time very much in need of him. It was a world from which the spirit of poetry seemed to have fled. There could be no stronger proof of this than the occupation of the throne of Spenser, Shakespere, and Milton by the arch-versifier Pope. The Revolution of 1688 was glorious, but unlike the Puritan Revolution which it followed, and in the political sphere partly ratified, it was profoundly prosaic. Spiritual religion, the source of Puritan grandeur and of the poetry of Milton, was almost extinct; there was not much more of it among the Nonconformists, who had now become to a great extent mere Whigs, with a decided Unitarian tendency. The Church was little better than a political force, cultivated and manipulated by political leaders for their own purposes. The Bishops were either politicians or theological polemics collecting trophies of victory over free-thinkers as titles to higher preferment. The inferior clergy, as a body, were far nearer in character to Trulliber than to Dr. Primrose; coarse, sordid, neglectful of their duties, shamelessly addicted to sinecurism and pluralities, fanatics in their Toryism and in attachment to their corporate privileges, cold, rationalistic and almost heathen in their preachings, if they preached at all. The society of the day is mirrored in the pictures of Hogarth, in the works of Fielding and Smollett; hard and heartless polish was the best of it; and not a little of it was *Mariage à la Mode.* Chesterfield, with his soulless culture, his court graces, and his fashionable immoralities, was about the highest type of an English gentleman; but the Wilkeses, Potters, and Sandwiches, whose mania for vice culminated in the Hell-fire Club, were more numerous than the Chesterfields. Among the country squires, for one Allworthy or Sir Roger de Coverley there were many Westerns. Among the common people religion was almost extinct, and assuredly no new morality or sentiment, such as Positivists now promise, had taken its place. Sometimes the rustic thought for himself, and scepticism took formal possession of his mind; but, as we see from one of Cowper's letters, it was a coarse scepticism which desired to be buried with its hounds. Ignorance and brutality reigned in the cottage. Drunkenness reigned in palace and cottage alike. Gambling, cockfighting, and bull-fighting were the amusements of the people. Political life, which, if it had been pure and vigorous, might have made up for the absence of spiritual influences, was corrupt from the top of the scale to the bottom: its effect on national character is portrayed in Hogarth's *Election.* That property had its duties as well as its rights, nobody had yet ventured to say or think. The duty of a gentleman towards his own class was to pay his debts of honor and to fight a duel whenever he was challenged by one of his own order; towards the lower class his duty was none. Though the forms of government were elective, and Cowper gives us a description of the candidate at election-time obsequiously soliciting votes, society was intensely aristocratic, and each rank was divided from that below it by a sharp line which precluded brotherhood or sympathy. Says the Duchess of Buckingham to Lady Huntingdon, who had asked her to come and hear Whitefield, "I thank your ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers; their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinctured with disrespect towards their superiors, in perpetually endeavoring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting; and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding. I shall be most happy to come and hear your favourite preacher." Her Grace's sentiments towards the common wretches that crawl on the earth were shared, we may be sure, by her Grace's waiting-maid. Of humanity there was as little as there was of religion. It was the age of the criminal law which hanged men for petty thefts, of life-long imprisonment for debt, of the stocks and the pillory, of a Temple Bar garnished with the heads of traitors, of the unreformed prison system, of the press-gang, of unrestrained tyranny and savagery at public schools. That the slave-trade was iniquitous, hardly any one suspected; even men who deemed themselves religious took part in it without scruple. But a change was at hand, and a still mightier change was in prospect. At the time of Cowper's birth, John Wesley was twenty-eight, and Whitefield was seventeen. With them the revival of religion was at hand. Johnson, the moral reformer, was twenty-two. Howard was born, and in less than a generation Wilberforce was to come.

When Cowper was six years old his mother died; and seldom has a child, even such a child, lost more, even in a mother. Fifty years after her death he still thinks of her, he says, with love and tenderness every day. Late in his life his cousin, Mrs. Anne Bodham, recalled herself to his remembrance by sending him his mother's picture. "Every creature," he writes, "that has any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her; I love you therefore, and love you much, both for her sake and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture which you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and received it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt had its dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it, and hung it where it is the last object which I see at night, and the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year; yet I remember her well, and am an ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper, and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side." As Cowper never married, there was nothing to take the place in his heart which had been left vacant by his mother.

"My mother! when I learn'd that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hover'd thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
Ah, that maternal smile!—it answers—Yes.
I heard the bell toll'd on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such?—It was.—Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.

What ardently I wish'd, I long believed,
And disappointed still, was still deceived;
By expectation every day beguiled,
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrows spent,
I learn'd at last submission to my lot,
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot."

In the years that followed no doubt he remembered her too well. At six years of age this little mass of timid and quivering sensibility was, in accordance with the cruel custom of the time, sent to a large boarding-school. The change from home to a boarding-school is bad enough now; it was much worse in those days.

"I had hardships," says Cowper, "of various kinds to conflict with, which I felt more sensibly in proportion to the tenderness with which I had been treated at home. But my chief affliction consisted in my being singled out from all the other boys by a lad of about fifteen years of age as a proper object upon whom he might let loose the cruelty of his temper. I choose to conceal a particular recital of the many acts of barbarity with which he made it his business continually to persecute me. It will be sufficient to say that his savage treatment of me impressed such a dread of his figure upon my mind, that I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than to his knees, and that I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress. May the Lord pardon him, and may we meet in glory!" Cowper charges himself, it may be in the exaggerated style of a self-accusing saint, with having become at school an adept in the art of lying. Southey says this must be a mistake, since at English public schools boys do not learn to lie. But the mistake is on Southey's part; bullying, such as this child endured, while it makes the strong boys tyrants, makes the weak boys cowards, and teaches them to defend themselves by deceit, the fist of the weak. The recollection of this boarding-school mainly it was that at a later day inspired the plea for a home education in *Tirocinium.*

"Then why resign into a stranger's hand
A task as much within your own command,
That God and nature, and your interest too,
Seem with one voice to delegate to you?
Why hire a lodging in a house unknown
For one whose tenderest thoughts all hover round your own?
This second weaning, needless as it is,
How does it lacerate both your heart and his!
The indented stick that loses day by day
Notch after notch, till all are smooth'd away,
Bears witness long ere his dismission come,
With what intense desire he wants his home.
But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof
Bid fair enough to answer in the proof,
Harmless, and safe, and natural as they are,
A disappointment waits him even there:
Arrived, he feels an unexpected change,
He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange.

> No longer takes, as once, with fearless ease,
> His favorite stand between his father's knees,
> But seeks the corner of some distant seat,
> And eyes the door, and watches a retreat,
> And, least familiar where he should be most,
> Feels all his happiest privileges lost.
> Alas, poor boy!—the natural effect
> Of love by absence chill'd into respect."

From the boarding-school, the boy, his eyes being liable to inflammation, was sent to live with an oculist, in whose house he spent two years, enjoying at all events a respite from the sufferings and the evils of the boarding-school. He was then sent to Westminster School, at that time in its glory. That Westminster in those days must have been a scene not merely of hardship, but of cruel suffering and degradation to the younger and weaker boys, has been proved by the researches of the Public Schools Commission. There was an established system and a regular vocabulary of bullying. Yet Cowper seems not to have been so unhappy there as at the private school; he speaks of himself as having excelled at cricket and football; and excellence in cricket and football at a public school generally carries with it, besides health and enjoyment, not merely immunity from bullying, but high social consideration. With all Cowper's delicacy and sensitiveness, he must have had a certain fund of physical strength, or he could hardly have borne the literary labor of his later years, especially as he was subject to the medical treatment of a worse than empirical era. At one time he says, while he was at Westminster, his spirits were so buoyant that he fancied he should never die, till a skull thrown out before him by a grave-digger as he was passing through St. Margaret's churchyard in the night recalled him to a sense of his mortality.

The instruction at a public-school in those days was exclusively classical. Cowper was under Vincent Bourne, his portrait of whom is in some respects a picture not only of its immediate subject, but of the school-master of the last century. "I love the memory of Vinny Bourne. I think him a better Latin poet than Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius, or any of the writers in his way, except Ovid, and not at all inferior to him. I love him too with a love of partiality, because he was usher of the fifth form at Westminster when I passed through it. He was so good-natured and so indolent that I lost more than I got by him, for he made me as idle as himself. He was such a sloven, as if he had trusted to his genius as a cloak for everything that could disgust you in his person; and indeed in his writings he has almost made amends for all. . . . I remember seeing the Duke of Richmond set fire to his greasy locks, and box his ears to put it out again." Cowper learned, if not to write Latin verses as well as Vinny Bourne himself, to write them very well, as his Latin versions of some of his own short poems bear witness. Not only so, but he evidently became a good classical scholar, as classical scholarship was in those days, and acquired the literary form of which the classics are the best school, Out of school hours he studied independently, as clever boys under the unexacting rule of the old public schools often did, and read through the whole of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with a friend. He also, probably, picked up at Westminster much of the little knowledge of the world which he ever possessed. Among his school-fellows was Warren Hastings, in whose guilt as proconsul he afterwards, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, refused to believe, and Impey, whose character has had the ill-fortune to be required as the shade in Macaulay's fancy picture of Hastings.

On leaving Westminster, Cowper, at eighteen, went to live with Mr. Chapman, an attorney, to whom he was articled, being destined for the Law. He chose that profession, he says, not of his own accord, but to gratify an indulgent father, who may have been led into the error by a recollection of the legal honors of the family, as well as by the "silver pence" which his promising son had won by his Latin verses at Westminster School. The youth duly slept at the attorney's house in Ely Place. His days were spent in "giggling and making giggle" with his cousins, Theodora and Harriet, the daughters of Ashley Cowper, in the neighboring Southampton Row. Ashley Cowper was a very little man, in a white hat lined with yellow, and his nephew used to say that he would one day be picked by mistake for a mushroom. His fellow-clerk in the office, and his accomplice in giggling and making giggle, was one strangely mated with him; the strong, aspiring, and unscrupulous Thurlow, who, though fond of pleasure, was at the same time preparing himself to push his way to wealth and power. Cowper felt that Thurlow would reach the summit of ambition, while he would himself remain below, and made his friend promise when he was Chancellor to give him something. When Thurlow was Chancellor, he gave Cowper his advice on translating Homer.

At the end of his three years with the attorney, Cowper took chambers in the Middle, from which he afterwards removed to the Inner Temple. The Temple is now a pile of law offices. In those days it was still a Society. One of Cowper's set says of it: "The Temple is the barrier that divides the City and Suburbs; and the gentlemen who reside there seem influenced by the situation of the place they inhabit. Templars are in general a kind of citizen courtiers. They aim at the air and the mien of the drawing-room; but the holy-day smoothness of a 'prentice, heightened with some additional touches of the rake or coxcomb, betrays itself in everything they do. The Temple, however, is stocked with its peculiar beaux, wits, poets, critics, and every character in the gay world; and it is a thousand pities that so pretty a society should be disgraced with a few dull fellows, who can submit to puzzle themselves with cases and reports, and have not taste enough to follow the genteel method of studying the law." Cowper, at all events, studied law by the genteel method; he read it almost as little in the Temple as he had in the attorney's office, though in due course of time he was formally called to the Bar, and even managed in some way to acquire a reputation which, when he had entirely given up the profession, brought him a curious offer of a readership at Lyons Inn. His time was given to literature, and he became a member of a little circle of men of letters and journalists which had its social centre in the Nonsense Club, consisting of seven Westminster men who dined together every Thursday. In the set were Bonnell Thornton and Colman, twin wits; fellow-writers of the periodical essays which were the rage in that day; joint proprietors of the *St. James's Chronicle*; contributors both of them to the *Connoisseur*; and translators, Colman of Terence, Bonnell Thornton of Plautus, Colman being a dramatist besides. In the set was Lloyd, another wit and essayist and a poet, with a character not of the best. On the edge of the set, but apparently not in it, was Churchill, who was then running a course which to many seemed meteoric, and of whose verse, sometimes strong but always turbid, Cowper conceived and retained an extravagant admiration. Churchill was a link to Wilkes; Hogarth, too, was an ally of Colman, and helped him in his exhibition of Signs. The set was strictly confined to Westminsters. Gray and Mason, being Etonians, were objects of its literary hostility, and butts of its satire. It is needless to say much about these literary companions of Cowper's youth; his intercourse with them was totally broken off; and before he himself became a poet its effects had been obliterated by madness, entire change of mind, and the lapse of twenty years. If a trace remained, it was in his admiration of Churchill's verses, and in the general results of literary society, and of early practice in composition. Cowper contributed to the *Connoisseur* and the *St. James's Chronicle.* His papers in the *Connoisseur* have been preserved; they are mainly imitations of the lighter papers of the *Spectator* by a student who affects the man of the world. He also dallied with poetry, writing verses to "Delia," and an epistle to Lloyd. He had translated an elegy of Tibullus when he was fourteen, and at Westminster he had written an imitation of Phillips's *Splendid Shilling*, which, Southey says, shows his manner formed. He helped his Cambridge brother, John Cowper, in a translation of the *Henriade.* He kept up his classics, especially his Homer. In his letters there are proofs of his familiarity with Rousseau. Two or three ballads which he wrote are lost, but he says they were popular, and we may believe him. Probably they were patriotic. "When poor Bob White," he says, "brought in the news of Boscawen's success off the coast of Portugal, how did I leap for joy! When Hawke demolished Conflans, I was still more transported. But nothing could express my rapture when Wolfe made the conquest of Quebec."

The "Delia" to whom Cowper wrote verses was his cousin Theodora, with whom he had an unfortunate love affair. Her father, Ashley Cowper, forbade their marriage, nominally on the ground of consanguinity; really, as Southey thinks, because he saw Cowper's unfitness for business, and inability to maintain a wife. Cowper felt the disappointment deeply at the time, as well he might do if Theodora resembled her sister, Lady Hesketh. Theodora remained unmarried, and, as we shall see, did not forget her lover. His letters she preserved till her death in extreme old age.

In 1756 Cowper's father died. There does not seem to have been much intercourse between them, nor does the son in after-years speak with any deep feeling of his loss; possibly his complaint in *Tirocinium* of the effect of boarding-schools, in estranging children from their parents, may have had some reference to his own case. His local affections, however, were very strong, and he felt with unusual keenness the final parting from his old home, and the pang of thinking that strangers usurp our dwelling and the familiar places will know us no more.

"Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nursery floor;
And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapp'd
In scarlet mantle warm and velvet capp'd.
'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we call'd the pastoral house our own."

Before the rector's death, it seems, his pen had hardly realized the cruel fraility of the tenure by which a home in a parsonage is held. Of the family of Burkhampstead Rectory there was now left besides himself only his brother John Cowper, Fellow of Caius College, Cambridge, whose birth had cost their mother's life.

When Cowper was thirty-two, and still living in the Temple, came the sad and decisive crisis of his life. He went mad, and attempted suicide. What was the source of his madness? There is a vague tradition that it arose from licentiousness, which, no doubt, is sometimes the cause of insanity. But in Cowper's case there is no proof of anything of the kind: his confessions, after his conversion, of his own past sinfulness point to nothing worse than general ungodliness and occasional excess in wine; and the tradition derives a color of probability only from the loose lives of one or two of the wits and Bohemians with whom he had lived. His virtuous love of Theodora was scarcely compatible with low and gross amours. Generally his madness is said to have been religious, and the blame is laid on the same foe to human weal as that of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. But when he first went mad, his conversion to Evangelicism had not taken place; he had not led a particularly religious life, nor been greatly given to religious practices, though as a clergyman's son he naturally believed in religion, had at times felt religious emotions, and when he found his heart sinking had tried devotional books and prayers. The truth is, his malady was simple hypochondria, having its source in delicacy of constitution and weakness of digestion, combined with the influence of melancholy surroundings. It had begun to attack him soon after his settlement in his lonely chambers in the Temple, when his pursuits and associations, as we have seen, were far from Evangelical. When its crisis arrived, he was living by himself without any society of the kind that suited him (for the excitement of the Nonsense Club was sure to be followed by reaction); he had lost his love, his father, his home, and, as it happened, also a dear friend; his little patrimony was fast dwindling away; he must have despaired of success in his profession; and his outlook was altogether dark. It yielded to the remedies to which hypochondria usually yields—air, exercise, sunshine, cheerful society, congenial occupation. It came with January and went with May. Its gathering gloom was dispelled for a time by a stroll in fine weather on the hills above Southampton Water, and Cowper said that he was never unhappy for a whole day in the company of Lady Hesketh. When he had become a Methodist, his hypochondria took a religious form, but so did his recovery from hypochondria; both must be set down to the account of his faith, or neither. This double aspect of the matter will plainly appear further on. A votary of wealth, when his brain gives way under disease or age, fancies that he is a beggar. A Methodist, when his brain gives way under the same influences, fancies that he is forsaken of God. In both cases the root of the malady is physical.

In the lines which Cowper sent on his disappointment to Theodora's sister, and which record the sources of his despondency, there is not a touch of religious despair, or of anything connected with religion. The catastrophe was brought on by an incident with which religion had nothing to do. The office of clerk of the Journals in the House of Lords fell vacant, and was in the gift of Cowper's kinsman, Major Cowper, as patentee. Cowper received the nomination. He had longed for the office sinfully, as he afterwards fancied; it would exactly have suited him, and made him comfortable for life. But his mind had by this time succumbed to his malady. His fancy conjured up visions of opposition to the appointment in the House of Lords, of hostility in the office where he had to study the Journals; of the terrors of an examination to be undergone before the frowning peers. After hopelessly poring over the Journals for some months he became quite mad, and his madness took a suicidal form. He has told with unsparing exactness the story of his attempts to kill himself. In his youth his father had unwisely given him a treatise in favor of suicide to read, and when he argued against it, had listened to his reasonings in a silence which he construed as sympathy with the writer, though it seems to have been only unwillingness to think too badly of the state of a departed friend. This now recurred to his mind, and talk with casual companions in taverns and chop-houses was enough in his present condition to confirm him in his belief that self-destruction was lawful. Evidently he was perfectly insane, for he could not take up a newspaper without reading in it a fancied libel on himself. First he bought laudanum, and had gone out into the fields with the intention of swallowing it, when the love of life suggested another way of escaping the dreadful ordeal. He might sell all he had, fly to France, change his religion, and bury himself in a monastery. He went home to pack up; but while he was looking over his portmanteau, his mood changed, and he again resolved on self-destruction. Taking a coach, he ordered the coachman to drive to the Tower Wharf, intending to throw himself into the river. But the love of life once more interposed, under the guise of a low tide and a porter seated on the quay. Again in the coach, and afterwards in his chambers, he tried to swallow the laudanum; but his hand was paralysed by "the convincing Spirit," aided by seasonable interruptions from the presence of his laundress and her husband, and at length he threw the laudanum away. On the night before the day appointed for the examination before the Lords, he lay some time with the point of his penknife pressed against his heart, but without courage to drive it home. Lastly, he tried to hang himself; and on this occasion he seems to have been saved not by the love of life, or by want of resolution, but by mere accident. He had become insensible, when the garter by which he was suspended broke, and his fall brought in the laundress, who supposed him to be in a fit. He sent her to a friend, to whom he related all that had passed, and despatched him to his kinsman. His kinsman arrived, listened with horror to the story, made more vivid by the sight of the broken garter, saw at once that all thought of the appointment was at an end, and carried away the instrument of nomination. Let those whom despondency assails read this passage of Cowper's life, and remember that he lived to write *John Gilpin* and *The Task*.

Cowper tells us that "to this moment he had felt no concern of a spiritual kind;" that "ignorant of original sin, insensible of the guilt of actual transgression, he understood neither the Law nor the Gospel; the condemning nature of the one, nor the restoring mercies of the other." But after attempting suicide he was seized, as he well might be, with religious horrors. Now it was that he began to ask himself whether he had been guilty of the unpardonable sin, and was presently persuaded that he had, though it would be vain to inquire what he imagined the unpardonable sin to be. In this mood, he fancied that if there was any balm for him in Gilead, it would be found in the ministrations of his friend Martin Madan, an Evangelical clergyman of high repute, whom he had been wont to regard as an enthusiast. His Cambridge brother, John, the translator of the *Henriade*, seems to have had some philosophic doubts as to the efficacy of the proposed remedy; but, like a philosopher, he consented to the experiment. Mr. Madan came and ministered, but in that distempered soul his balm turned to poison; his religious conversations only fed the horrible illusion. A set of English Sapphics, written by Cowper at this time, and expressing his despair, were unfortunately preserved; they are a ghastly play of the poetic faculty in a mind utterly deprived of self-control, and amidst the horrors of inrushing madness. Diabolical they might be termed more truly than religious.

There was nothing for it but a madhouse. The sufferer was consigned to the private asylum of Dr. Cotton, at St. Alban's. An ill-chosen physician Dr. Cotton would have been, if the malady had really had its source in religion, for he was himself a pious man, a writer of hymns, and was in the habit of holding religious intercourse with his patients. Cowper, after his recovery, speaks of that intercourse with the keenest pleasure and gratitude; so that, in the opinion of the two persons best qualified to judge, religion in this case was not the bane. Cowper has given us a full account of his recovery. It was brought about, as we can plainly see, by medical treatment wisely applied; but it came in the form of a burst of religious faith and hope. He rises one morning feeling better; grows cheerful over his breakfast, takes up the Bible, which in his fits of madness he always threw aside, and turns to a verse in the Epistle to the Romans. "Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon in His blood, and the fulness and completeness of His justification. In a moment I believed and received the Gospel." Cotton at first mistrusted the sudden change; but he was at length satisfied, pronounced his patient cured, and discharged him from the asylum, after a detention of eighteen months. Cowper hymned his deliverance in *The Happy Change*, as in the hideous Sapphics he had given religious utterance to his despair.

"The soul, a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire form'd within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

"The glorious orb whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first obedient to Thy word,
He started from the goal,

"Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart;
But, Jesus, 'tis Thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart."

Once for all, the reader of Cowper's life must make up his mind to acquiesce in religious forms of expression. If he does not sympathize with them, he will recognize them as phenomena of opinion, and bear them like a philosopher. He can easily translate them into the language of psychology, or even of physiology, if he thinks fit.

CHAPTER II.

AT HUNTINGDON—THE UNWINS.

THE storm was over, but it had swept away a great part of Cowper's scanty fortune, and almost all his friends. At thirty-five he was stranded and desolate. He was obliged to resign a Commissionership of Bankruptcy which he held, and little seems to have remained to him but the rent of his chambers in the Temple. A return to his profession was, of course, out of the question. His relations, however, combined to make up a little income for him, though from a hope of his family, he had become a melancholy disappointment; even the Major contributing, in spite of the rather trying incident of the nomination. His brother was kind, and did a brother's duty, but there does not seem to have been much sympathy between them; John Cowper did not become a convert to Evangelical doctrine till he was near his end, and he was incapable of sharing William's spiritual emotions. Of his brilliant companions, the Bonnell Thorntons and the Colmans, the quondam members of the Nonsense Club, he heard no more till he had himself become famous. But he still had a stanch friend in a less brilliant member of the club, Joseph Hill, the lawyer, evidently a man who united strong sense and depth of character with literary tastes and love of fun, and who was throughout Cowper's life his Mentor in matters of business, with regard to which he was himself a child. He had brought with him from the asylum at St. Alban's the servant who had attended him there, and who had been drawn by the singular talisman of personal attraction which partly made up to this frail and helpless being for his entire lack of force. He had also brought from the same place an outcast boy whose case had excited his interest, and for whom he afterwards provided by putting him to a trade. The maintenance of these two retainers was expensive, and led to grumbling among the subscribers to the family subsidy, the Major especially threatening to withdraw his contribution. While the matter was in agitation, Cowper received an anonymous letter couched in the kindest terms, bidding him not distress himself, for that whatever deduction from his income might be made, the loss would be supplied by one who loved him tenderly and approved his conduct. In a letter to Lady Hesketh, he says that he wishes he knew who dictated this letter, and that he had seen not long before a style excessively like it. He can scarcely have failed to guess that it came from Theodora.

It is due to Cowper to say that he accepts the assistance of his relatives, and all acts of kindness done to him, with sweet and becoming thankfulness; and that whatever dark fancies he may have had about his religious state when the evil spirit was upon him, he always speaks with contentment and cheerfulness of his earthly lot. Nothing splenetic, no element of suspicious and irritable self-love entered into the composition of his character.

On his release from the asylum he was taken in hand by his brother John, who first tried to find lodgings for him at or near Cambridge, and, failing in this, placed him at Huntingdon, within a long ride, so that William becoming a horseman for the purpose, the brothers could meet once a week. Huntingdon was a quiet little town with less than two thousand inhabitants, in a dull country, the best part of which was the Ouse, especially to Cowper, who was fond of bathing. Life there, as in other English country towns in those days, and, indeed, till railroads made people everywhere too restless and migratory for companionship, or even for acquaintance, was sociable in an unrefined way. There were assemblies, dances, races, card-parties, and a bowling-green, at which the little world met and enjoyed itself. From these the new convert, in his spiritual ecstasy, of course turned away as mere modes of murdering time. Three families received him with civility, two of them with cordiality; but the chief acquaintances he made were with "odd scrambling fellows like himself;" an eccentric water-drinker and vegetarian who was to be met by early risers and walkers every morning at six o'clock by his favorite spring; a char-parson, of the class common in those days of sinecurism and non-residence, who walked sixteen miles every Sunday to serve two churches, besides reading daily prayers at Huntingdon, and who regaled his friend with ale brewed by his own hands. In his attached servant the recluse boasted that he had a friend; a friend he might have, but hardly a companion.

For the first days, and even weeks, however, Huntingdon seemed a paradise. The heart of its new inhabitants was full of the unspeakable happiness that comes with calm after storm, with health after the most terrible of maladies, with repose after the burning fever of the brain. When first he went to church he was in a spiritual ecstasy; it was with difficulty that he restrained his emotions; though his voice was silent, being stopped by the intensity of his feelings, his heart within him sang for joy; and when the Gospel of the day was read, the sound of it was more than he could well bear. This brightness of his mind communicated itself to all the objects round him—to the sluggish waters of the Ouse, to dull, fenny Huntingdon, and to its commonplace inhabitants.

For about three months his cheerfulness lasted, and with the help of books, and his rides to meet his brother, he got on pretty well; but then "the communion which he had so long been able to maintain with the Lord was suddenly interrupted." This is his theological version of the case; the rationalistic version immediately follows: "I began to dislike my solitary situation, and to fear I should never be able to weather out the winter in so lonely a dwelling." No man could be less fitted to bear a lonely life; persistence in the attempt would soon have brought back his madness. He was longing for a home; and a home was at hand to receive him. It was not, perhaps, one of the happiest kind; but the influence which detracted from its advantages was the one which rendered it hospitable to the wanderer. If Christian piety was carried to a morbid excess beneath its roof Christian charity opened its door.

The religious revival was now in full career, with Wesley for its chief apostle, organizer, and dictator; Whitefield for its great preacher; Fletcher of Madeley for its typical saint; Lady Huntingdon for its patroness among the aristocracy, and the chief of its "devout women." From the pulpit, but still more from the stand of the field-preacher and through a well-trained army of social propagandists, it was assailing the skepticism, the coldness, the frivolity, the vices of the age. English society was deeply stirred; multitudes were converted; while among those who were not converted violent and sometimes cruel antagonism was aroused. The party had two wings—the Evangelicals, people of the wealthier class or clergymen of the Church of England, who remained within the Establishment; and the Methodists, people of the lower middle class or peasants, the personal converts and followers of Wesley and Whitefield, who, like their leaders, without a positive secession, soon found themselves organizing a separate spiritual life in the freedom of Dissent. In the early stages of the movement the Evangelicals were to be counted at most by hundreds, the Methodists by hundreds of thousands. So far as the masses were concerned, it was, in fact, a preaching of Christianity anew. There was a cross division of the party into the Calvinists and those whom the Calvinists called Arminians; Wesley belonging to the latter section, while the most pronounced and vehement of the Calvinists was "the fierce Toplady." As a rule, the darker and sterner element, that which delighted in religious terrors and threatenings, was Calvinist; the milder and gentler, that which preached a gospel of love and hope, continued to look up to Wesley, and to bear with him the reproach of being Arminian.

It is needless to enter into a minute description of Evangelicism and Methodism; they are not things of the past. If Evangelicism has now been reduced to a narrow domain by the advancing forces of Ritualism on one side and of Rationalism on the other, Methodism is still the great Protestant Church, especially beyond the Atlantic. The spiritual fire which they have kindled, the character which they have produced, the moral reforms which they have wrought, the works of charity and philanthropy to which they have given birth, are matters not only of recent memory, but of present experience. Like the great Protestant revivals which had preceded them in England, like the Moravian revival on the Continent, to which they were closely related, they sought to bring the soul into direct communion with its Maker, rejecting the intervention of a priesthood or a sacramental system. Unlike the previous revivals in England, they warred not against the rulers of the

Church or State, but only against vice or irreligion. Consequently, in the characters which they produced, as compared with those produced by Wycliffism, by the Reformation, and notably by Puritanism, there was less of force and the grandeur connected with it, more of gentleness, mysticism, and religious love. Even Quietism, or something like it, prevailed, especially among the Evangelicals, who were not like the Methodists, engaged in framing a new organization or in wrestling with the barbarous vices of the lower orders. No movement of the kind has ever been exempt from drawbacks and follies, from extravagance, exaggeration, breaches of good taste in religious matters, unctuousness, and cant—from chimerical attempts to get rid of the flesh and live an angelic life on earth—from delusions about special providences and miracles—from a tendency to overvalue doctrine and undervalue duty—from arrogant assumption of spiritual authority by leaders and preachers—from the self-righteousness which fancies itself the object of a divine election, and looks out with a sort of religious complacency from the Ark of Salvation in which it fancies itself securely placed, upon the drowning of an unregenerate world. Still, it will hardly be doubted that in the effects produced by Evangelicism and Methodism, the good has outweighed the evil. Had Jansenism prospered as well, France might have had more of reform and less of revolution. The poet of the movement will not be condemned on account of his connection with it, any more than Milton is condemned on account of his connection with Puritanism, provided it be found that he also served art well.

Cowper, as we have seen, was already converted. In a letter written at this time to Lady Hesketh, he speaks of himself with great humility "as a convert made in Bedlam, who is more likely to be a stumbling-block to others than to advance their faith," though he adds, with reason enough, "that he who can ascribe an amendment of life and manners, and a reformation of the heart itself, to madness, is guilty of an absurdity that in any other case would fasten the imputation of madness upon himself." It is hence to be presumed that he traced his conversion to his spiritual intercourse with the Evangelical physician of St. Alban's, though the seed sown by Martin Madan may, perhaps, also have sprung up in his heart when the more propitious season arrived. However that may have been, the two great factors of Cowper's life were the malady which consigned him to poetic seclusion and the conversion to Evangelicism, which gave him his inspiration and his theme.

At Huntingdon dwelt the Rev. William Unwin, a clergyman, taking pupils, his wife, much younger than himself, and their son and daughter. It was a typical family of the Revival. Old Mr. Unwin is described by Cowper as a Parson Adams. The son, William Unwin, was preparing for holy orders. He was a man of some mark, and received tokens of intellectual respect from Paley, though he is best known as the friend to whom many of Cowper's letters are addressed.

He it was who, struck by the appearance of the stranger, sought an opportunity of making his acquaintance. He found one, after morning church, when Cowper was taking his solitary walk beneath the trees. Under the influence of religious sympathy the acquaintance quickly ripened into friendship; Cowper at once became one of the Unwin circle, and soon afterward, a vacancy being made by the departure of one of the pupils, he became a boarder in the house. This position he had passionately desired on religious grounds; but, in truth, he might well have desired it on economical grounds also, for he had begun to experience the difficulty and expensiveness, as well as the loneliness, of bachelor housekeeping, and financial deficit was evidently before him. To Mrs. Unwin he was from the first strongly drawn. "I met Mrs. Unwin in the street," he says, "and went home with her. She and I walked together near two hours in the garden, and had a conversation which did me more good than I should have received from an audience with the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company." Mrs. Unwin's character is written in her portrait with its prim but pleasant features; a Puritan and a precisian she was; but she was not morose or sour, and she had a boundless capacity for affection. Lady Hesketh, a woman of the world, and a good judge in every respect, says of her at a later period, when she had passed with Cowper through many sad and trying years: "She is very far from grave; on the contrary, she is cheerful and gay, and laughs *de bon cœur* upon the smallest provocation. Amidst all the little puritanical words which fall from her *de temps en temps*, she seems to have by nature a quiet fund of gayety; great indeed must it have been, not to have been wholly overcome by the close confinement in which she has lived, and the anxiety she must have undergone for one whom she certainly loves as well as one human being can love another. I will not say she idolizes him, because that she would think wrong; but she certainly seems to possess the truest regard and affection for this excellent creature, and, as I said before, has in the most litteral sense of those words, no will or shadow of inclination but what is his. My account of Mrs. Unwin may seem, perhaps, to you, on comparing my letters, contradictory; but when you consider that I began to write at the first moment that I saw her, you will not wonder. Her character develops itself by degrees; and though I might lead you to suppose her grave and melancholy, she is not so by any means. When she speaks upon grave subjects, she does express herself with a puritanical tone, and in puritanical expressions, but on all subjects she seems to have a great disposition to cheerfulness and mirth; and, indeed, had she not, she could not have gone through all she has. I must say, too, that she seems to be very well read in the English poets, as appears by several little quotations which she makes from time to time, and has a true taste for what is excellent in that way."

When Cowper became an author he paid the highest respect to Mrs.

Unwin as an instinctive critic, and called her his Lord Chamberlain, whose approbation was his sufficient license for publication.

Life in the Unwin family is thus described by the new inmate: "As to amusements—I mean what the world calls such—we have none. The place, indeed, swarms with them; and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessories to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists Having told you how we *do not* spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine: till eleven we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries; at eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval, I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but, if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where, with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse as before till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon, and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell you that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness; accordingly, we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren."

Mrs. Cowper, the wife of Major (now Colonel) Cowper, to whom this was written, was herself strongly Evangelical; Cowper had, in fact, unfortunately for him, turned from his other relations and friends to her on that account. She, therefore, would have no difficulty in thinking that such a life was consistent with cheerfulness, but ordinary readers will ask how it could fail to bring on another fit of hypochondria. The answer is probably to be found in the last words of the passage. Overstrained and ascetic piety found an antidote in affection. The Unwins were Puritans and enthusiasts, but their household was a picture of domestic love.

With the name of Mrs. Cowper is connected an incident which occurred at this time, and which illustrates the propensity to self-inspection and self-revelation which Cowper had in common with Rousseau. Huntingdon, like other little towns, was all eyes and gossip; the newcomer was a mysterious stranger who kept himself aloof from the general society, and he naturally became the mark for a little stone-throwing. Young Unwin happening to be passing near "the Park" on his way from London to Huntingdon, Cowper gave him an introduction to its lady, in a letter to whom he afterwards disclosed his secret motive. "My dear Cousin: You sent my friend Unwin home to us charmed with your kind reception of him, and with everything he saw at the Park. Shall I once more give you a peep into my vile and deceitful heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect, at first, that pride and vainglory had any share in it; but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him, I discovered, in that fruitful soil, the very root of the matter. You know I am a stranger here; all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is a matter of speculation in the place, whence I came, and to whom I belong. Though my friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an inmate here, was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond, and has, since that time, received more convincing proofs of my *sponsibility;* yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it, by introducing him to one of my most splendid connections; that when he hears me called 'that fellow Cowper,' which has happened heretofore, he may be able, upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my gentlemanhood, and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh, pride! pride! it deceives with the subtlety of a serpent, and seems to walk erect, though it crawls upon the earth. How will it twist and twine itself about to get from under the Cross, which it is the glory of our Christian calling to be able to bear with patience and good-will. They who can guess at the heart of a stranger—and you especially, who are of a compassionate temper—will be more ready, perhaps, to excuse me, in this instance, than I can be to excuse myself. But, in good truth, it was abominable pride of heart, indignation, and vanity, and deserves no better name."

Once more, however obsolete Cowper's belief, and the language in which he expresses it may have become for many of us, we must take it as his philosophy of life. At this time, at all events, it was a source of happiness. "The storm being passed, a quiet and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded;" and the serenity in this case was unquestionably produced in part by the faith.

"I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since; with many an arrow deep infixed
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by one who had himself
Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars,
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth and healed and bade me live.'

Cowper thought for a moment of taking orders, but his dread of appearing in public conspired with the good sense which lay beneath his excessive sensibility to put a veto on the design. He, however, exercised the zeal of a neophyte in proselytism to a greater extent than his own judgment and good taste approved when his enthusiasm had calmed down.

CHAPTER III.

AT OLNEY—MR. NEWTON.

COWPER had not been two years with the Unwins when Mr. Unwin, the father, was killed by a fall from his horse; this broke up the household. But between Cowper and Mrs. Unwin an indissoluble tie had been formed. It seems clear, notwithstanding Southey's assertion to the contrary, that they at one time meditated marriage, possibly as a propitation to the evil tongues which did not spare even this most innocent connection; but they were prevented from fulfilling their intention by a return of Cowper's malady. They became companions for life. Cowper says they were as mother and son to each other; but Mrs. Unwin was only seven years older than he. To label their connection is impossible, and to try to do it would be a platitude. In his poems Cowper calls Mrs. Unwin Mary; she seems always to have called him Mr. Cowper. It is evident that her son, a strictly virtuous and religious man, never had the slightest misgiving about his mother's position.

The pair had to choose a dwelling-place; they chose Olney, in Buckinghamshire, on the Ouse. The Ouse was "a slow winding river," watering low meadows, from which crept pestilential fogs. Olney was a dull town, or rather village, inhabited by a population of lace-makers, ill-paid, fever-stricken, and for the most part as brutal as they were poor. There was not a woman in the place, excepting Mrs. Newton, with whom Mrs. Unwin could associate, or to whom she could look for help in sickness or other need. The house in which the pair took up their abode was dismal, prison-like, and tumble-down; when they left it, the competitors for the succession were a cobbler and a publican. It looked upon the market-place, but it was in the close neighborhood of Silver End, the worst part of Olney. In winter the cellars were full of water, There were no pleasant walks within easy reach, and in winter Cowper's only exercise was pacing thirty yards of gravel, with the dreary supplement of dumb-bells. What was the attraction to this "well," this "abyss," as Cowper himself called it, and as, physically and socially, it was?

The attraction was the presence of the Rev. John Newton, then curate of Olney. The vicar was Moses Brown, an Evangelical and a religious writer, who has even deserved a place among the worthies of the revival; but a family of thirteen children, some of whom it appears too closely resembled the sons of Eli, had compelled him to take advantage of the indulgent character of the ecclesiastical polity of those days by becoming a pluralist and a non-resident, so that the curate had Olney to himself. The patron was the Lord Dartmouth, who, as Cowper says, "wore a coronet and prayed." John Newton was one of the shining lights and foremost leaders and preachers of the revival. His name was great both in the Evangelical churches within the pale of the Establishment, and in the Methodist churches without it. He was a brand plucked from the very heart of the burning. We have a memoir of his life, partly written by himself, in the form of letters, and completed under his superintendence. It is a monument of the age of Smollett and Wesley, not less characteristic than is Cellini's memoir of the times in which he lived. His father was master of a vessel, and took him to sea when he was eleven. His mother was a pious Dissenter, who was at great pains to store his mind with religious thoughts and pieces. She died when he was young, and his step-mother was not pious. He began to drag his religious anchor, and at length, having read Shaftesbury, left his theological moorings altogether, and drifted into a wide sea of ungodliness, blasphemy, and recklessness of living. Such at least is the picture drawn by the sinner saved of his own earlier years. While still but a strippling he fell desperately in love with a girl of thirteen; his affection for her was as constant as it was romantic; through all his wanderings and sufferings he never ceased to think of her, and after seven years she became his wife. His father frowned on the engagement, and he became estranged from home. He was impressed; narrowly escaped shipwreck, deserted, and was arrested and flogged as a deserter. Released from the navy, he was taken into the service of a slave-dealer on the coast of Africa, at whose hands, and those of the man's negro mistress, he endured every sort of ill-treatment and contumely, being so starved that he was fain sometimes to devour raw roots to stay his hunger. His constitution must have been of iron to carry him through all that he endured. In the mean time his indomitable mind was engaged in attempts at self-culture; he studied a Euclid which he had brought with him, drawing his diagrams on the sand; and he afterwards managed to teach himself Latin by means of a Horace and a Latin Bible, aided by some slight vestiges of the education which he had received at a grammar-school. His conversion was brought about by the continued influences of Thomas à Kempis, of a very narrow escape, after terrible sufferings, from shipwreck, of the impression made by the sights of the mighty deep on a soul which, in its weather-beaten casing, had retained its native sensibility, and, we may safely add, of the disregarded but not forgotten teachings of his pious mother. Providence was now kind to him; he became captain of a slave-ship, and made several voyages on the business of the trade. That it was a wicked trade he seems to have had no idea; he says he never knew sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than on his two last voyages to Guinea. Afterwards it occurred to him that though his employment was genteel and profitable, it made him a sort of gaoler, unpleasantly conversant with both chains and shackles; and he besought Providence to fix him in a more humane calling.

In answer to his prayer came a fit of apoplexy, which made it dangerous for him to go to sea again. He obtained an office in the port of Liverpool, but soon he set his heart on becoming a minister of the Church of England. He applied for ordination to the Archbishop of York, but not having the degree required by the rules of the Establishment, he received through his Grace's secretary "the softest refusal imaginable." The Archbishop had not had the advantage of perusing Lord Macaulay's remarks on the difference between the policy of the Church of England and that of the Church of Rome, with regard to the utilization of religious enthusiasts. In the end Newton was ordained by the Bishop of Lincoln, and threw himself with the energy of a new-born apostle upon the irreligion and brutality of Olney. No Carthusian's breast could glow more intensely with the zeal which is the offspring of remorse. Newton was a Calvinist, of course, though it seems not an extreme one; otherwise he would probably have confirmed Cowper in the darkest of hallucinations. His religion was one of mystery and miracle, full of sudden conversions, special providences, and satanic visitations. He himself says that "his name was up about the country for preaching people mad;" it is true that in the eyes of the profane Methodism itself was madness; but he goes on to say "whether it is owing to the sedentary life the women live here, poring over their (lace) pillows for ten or twelve hours every day, and breathing confined air in their crowded little rooms, or whatever may be the immediate cause, I suppose we have near a dozen in different degrees disordered in their heads, and most of them I believe truly gracious people." He surmises that "these things are permitted in judgment, that they who seek occasion for cavilling and stumbling may have what they want." Nevertheless there were in him not only force, courage, burning zeal for doing good, but great kindness, and even tenderness of heart. "I see in this world," he said, "two heaps of human happiness and misery; now, if I can take but the smallest bit from one heap and add it to the other, I carry a point—if, as I go home, a child has dropped a half-penny, and by giving it another, I can wipe away its tears, I feel I have done something." There was even in him a strain, if not of humor, of a shrewdness which was akin to it, and expressed itself in many pithy sayings. "If two angels came down from heaven to execute a divine command, and one was appointed to conduct an empire and the other to sweep a street in it, they would feel no inclination to change employments." "A Christian should never plead spirituality for being a sloven; if he be but a shoe-cleaner, he should be the best in the parish." "My principal method for defeating heresy is by establishing truth. One proposes to fill a bushel with tares; now if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts." That his Calvinism was not very dark or sulphureous, seems to be shown from his repeating with gusto the saying of one of the old women of Olney when some preacher dwelt on the doctrine of predestination—"Ah, I have long settled that point; for if God had not chosen me before I was born, I am sure he would have seen nothing to have chosen me for afterwards." That he had too much sense to take mere profession for religion appears from his describing the Calvinists of Olney as of two sorts, which reminded him of the two baskets of Jeremiah's figs. The iron constitution which had carried him through so many hardships enabled him to continue in his ministry to extreme old age. A friend at length counselled him to stop before he found himself stopped by being able to speak no longer. "I cannot stop," he said, raising his voice. "What! shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?"

At the instance of a common friend, Newton had paid Mrs. Unwin a visit at Huntingdon, after her husband's death, and had at once established the ascendency of a powerful character over her and Cowper. He now beckoned the pair to his side, placed them in the house adjoining his own, and opened a private door between the two gardens, so as to have his spiritual children always beneath his eye. Under this, in the most essential respect, unhappy influence, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin together entered on "a decided course of Christian happiness;" that is to say, they spent all their days in a round of religious exercises without relaxation or relief, On fine summer evenings, as the sensible Lady Hesketh saw with dismay, instead of a walk, there was a prayer-meeting, Cowper himself was made to do violence to his intense shyness by leading in prayer. He was also made to visit the poor at once on spiritual missions, and on that of almsgiving, for which Thornton, the religious philanthropist, supplied Newton and his disciples with means. This, which Southey appears to think about the worst part of Newton's regimen, was probably its redeeming future. The effect of doing good to others on any mind was sure to be good; and the sight of real suffering was likely to banish fancied ills. Cowper in this way gained, at all events, a practical knowledge of the poor, and learned to do them justice, though from a rather too theological point of view. Seclusion from the sinful world was as much a part of the system of Mr. Newton as it was of the system of Saint Benedict. Cowper was almost entirely cut off from intercourse with his friends and people of his own class. He dropped his correspondence even with his beloved cousin, Lady Hesketh, and would probably have dropped his correspondence with Hill, had not Hill's assistance in money matters been indispensable. To complete his mental isolation, it appears that, having sold his library, he had scarcely any books. Such a course of Christian happiness as this could only end in one way; and Newton himself seems to have had the sense to see that a storm was brewing, and that there was no way of conjuring it but by contriving some more congenial occupation. So the disciple was commanded to employ his poetical gifts in contributing to a hymn-book which Newton was compiling. Cowper's Olney hymns have not any serious value as poetry. Hymns rarely have. The relations of man with Deity transcend and repel poetical treatment. There is nothing in them on which the creative imagination can be exercised. Hymns can be little more than incense of the worshipping soul. Those of the Latin Church are the best; not because they are better poetry than the rest (for they are not), but because their language is the most sonorous. Cowper's hymns were accepted by the religious body for which they were written, as expressions of its spiritual feeling and desires; so far they were successful. They are the work of a religious man of culture, and free from anything wild, erotic, or unctuous. But, on the other hand, there is nothing in them suited to be the vehicle of lofty devotion; nothing, that we can conceive a multitude, or even a prayer-meeting, uplifting to heaven with voice and heart. Southey has pointed to some passages on which the shadow of the advancing malady falls; but in the main there is a predominance of religious joy and hope. The most despondent hymn of the series is *Temptation*, the thought of which resembles that of *The Castaway*.

Cowper's melancholy may have been aggravated by the loss of his only brother, who died about this time, and at whose death-bed he was present; though in the narrative which he wrote, joy at John's conversion and the religious happiness of his end seems to exclude the feelings by which hypochondria was likely to be fed. But his mode of life under Newton was enough to account for the return of his disease, which in this sense may be fairly laid to the charge of religion. He again went mad, fancied, as before, that he was rejected of Heaven, ceased to pray as one helplessly doomed, and again attempted suicide. Newton and Mrs. Unwin at first treated the disease as a diabolical visitation, and "with deplorable consistency," to borrow the phrase used by one of their friends, in the case of Cowper's desperate abstinence from prayer abstained from calling in a physician. Of this, again, their religion must bear the reproach. In other respects they behaved admirably. Mrs. Unwin, shut up for sixteen months with her unhappy partner, tended him with unfailing love; alone she did it, for he could bear no one else about him; though, to make her part more trying, he had conceived the insane idea that she hated him. Seldom has a stronger proof been given of the sustaining power of affection. Assuredly, of whatever Cowper may have afterwards done for his kind, a great part must be set down to the credit of Mrs. Unwin.

"Mary! I want a lyre with other strings,
Such aid from heaven as some have feigned they drew,
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
And undebased by praise of meaner things,
That, ere through age or woe I shed my wings,
I may record thy worth with honor due,
In verse as musical as thou art true,
And that immortalizes whom it sings.
But thou hast little need. There is a book
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light,
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,
A chronicle of actions just and bright;
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine,
And, since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine."

Newton's friendship, too, was sorely tried. In the midst of the malady the lunatic took it into his head to transfer himself from his own house to the Vicarage, which he obstinately refused to leave; and Newton bore this infliction for several months without repining, though he might well pray earnestly for his friend's deliverance. "The Lord has numbered the days in which I am appointed to wait on him in this dark valley, and he has given us such a love to him, both as a believer and a friend, that I am not weary; but to be sure his deliverance would be to me one of the greatest blessings my thoughts can conceive." Dr. Cotton was at last called in, and under his treatment, evidently directed against a bodily disease, Cowper was at length restored to sanity.

Newton once compared his own walk in the world to that of a physician going through Bedlam. But he was not skilful in his treatment of the literally insane. He thought to cajole Cowper out of his cherished horrors by calling his attention to a case resembling his own. The case was that of Simon Browne, a Dissenter, who had conceived the idea that, being under the displeasure of Heaven, he had been entirely deprived of his rational being and left with merely his animal nature. He had accordingly resigned his ministry, and employed himself in compiling a dictionary, which, he said, was doing nothing that could require a reasonable soul. He seems to have thought that theology fell under the same category, for he proceeded to write some theological treatises, which he dedicated to Queen Caroline, calling her Majesty's attention to the singularity of the authorship as the most remarkable phenomenon of her reign. Cowper, however, instead of falling into the desired train of reasoning, and being led to suspect the existence of a similar illusion in himself, merely rejected the claim of the pretended rival in spiritual affliction, declaring his own case to be far the more deplorable of the two.

Before the decided course of Christian happiness had time again to culminate in madness, fortunately for Cowper, Newton left Olney for St. Mary Woolnoth. He was driven away at last by a quarrel with his barbarous parishioners, the cause of which did him credit. A fire broke out at Olney and burnt a good many of its straw-thatched cottages. Newton ascribed the extinction of the fire rather to prayer than water, but he took the lead in practical measures of relief, and tried to remove the earthly cause of such visitations by putting an end to bonfires and illuminations on the 5th of November. Threatened with the loss of their Guy Fawkes, the barbarians rose upon him, and he had a narrow escape from their violence. We are reminded of the case of Cotton Mather, who, after being a leader in witch-burning, nearly sacrificed his life in combating the fanaticism which opposed itself to the introduction of inoculation. Let it always be remembered that besides its theological side, the Revival had its philanthropic and moral side; that it abolished the slave-trade, and at last slavery; that it waged war, and effective war, under the standard of the Gospel, upon masses of vice and brutality, which had been totally neglected by the torpor of the Establishment; that among large classes of the people it was the great civilizing agency of the time.

Newton was succeeded as curate of Olney by his disciple, and a man of somewhat the same cast of mind and character, Thomas Scott, the writer of the *Commentary on the Bible* and *The Force of Truth.* To Scott Cowper seems not to have greatly taken. He complains that, as a preacher, he is always scolding the congregation. Perhaps Newton had foreseen that it would be so, for he specially commended the spiritual son whom he was leaving to the care of the Rev. William Bull, of the neighboring town of Newport Pagnell, a dissenting minister, but a member of a spiritual connection which did not stop at the line of demarcation between Nonconformity and the Establishment. To Bull Cowper did greatly take; he extols him as "a Dissenter, but a liberal one," a man of letters and of genius, master of a fine imagination—or rather, not master of it—and addresses him as *Carissime Taurorum.* It is rather singular that Newton should have given himself such a successor. Bull was a great smoker, and had made himself a cosey and secluded nook in his garden for the enjoyment of his pipe. He was probably something of a spiritual as well as of a physical Quietist, for he set Cowper to translate the poetry of the great exponent of Quietism, Madame Guyon. The theme of all the pieces which Cowper has translated is the same—Divine Love and the raptures of the heart that enjoys it—the blissful union of the drop with the Ocean—the Evangelical Nirvana. If this line of thought was not altogether healthy, or conducive to the vigorous performance of practical duty, it was, at all events, better than the dark fancy of Reprobation. In his admiration of Madame Guyon, her translator showed his affinity, and that of Protestants of the same school, to Fénélon and the Evangelical element which has lurked in the Roman Catholic Church since the days of Thomas à Kempis.

CHAPTER IV.

AUTHORSHIP—THE MORAL SATIRES.

SINCE his recovery, Cowper had been looking out for what he most needed, a pleasant occupation. He tried drawing, carpentering, gardening. Of gardening he had always been fond; and he understood it, as shown by the loving though somewhat "stercoraceous" minuteness of some passages in *The Task*. A little greenhouse, used as a parlor in summer, where he sat surrounded by beauty and fragrance, and lulled by pleasant sounds, was another product of the same pursuit, and seems almost Elysian in that dull, dark life. He also found amusement in keeping tame hares, and he fancied that he had reconciled the hare to man and dog. His three tame hares are among the canonized pets of literature, and they were to his genius what "Sailor" was to the genius of Byron. But Mrs. Unwin, who had terrible reason for studying his case, saw that the thing most wanted was congenial employment for the mind, and she incited him to try his hand at poetry on a larger scale. He listened to her advice, and when he was nearly fifty years of age became a poet. He had acquired the faculty of verse-writing, as we have seen; he had even to some extent formed his manner when he was young. Age must by this time have quenched his fire, and tamed his imagination, so that the didactic style would suit him best. In the length of the interval between his early poems and his great work he resembles Milton; but widely different in the two cases had been the current of the intervening years.

Poetry written late in life is, of course, free from youthful crudity and extravagance. It also escapes the youthful tendency to imitation. Cowper's authorship is ushered in by Southey with a history of English poetry; but this is hardly in place; Cowper had little connection with anything before him. Even his knowledge of poetry was not great. In his youth he had read the great poets, and had studied Milton especially with the ardor of intense admiration. Nothing ever made him so angry as Johnson's Life of Milton. "Oh!" he cries, "I could thrash his old jacket till I made his pension jingle in his pocket." Churchill had made a great—far too great—an impression on him when he was a Templar. Of Churchill, if of anybody, he must be regarded as a follower, though only in his earlier and less successful poems. In expression he always regarded as a model the neat and gay simplicity of Prior. But so little had he kept up his reading of anything but sermons and hymns, that he learned for the first time from Johnson's Lives the existence of Collins. He is the offspring of the Religious Revival rather than of any school of art. His most important relation to any of his predecessors is, in fact, one of antagonism to the hard glitter of Pope.

In urging her companion to write poetry, Mrs. Unwin was on the right path; her puritanism led her astray in the choice of a theme. She suggested *The Progress of Error* as a subject for a "Moral Satire." It was unhappily adopted, and *The Progress of Error* was followed by *Truth*, *Table Talk*, *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation*, and *Retirement*. When the series was published, *Table Talk* was put first, being supposed to be the lightest and the most attractive to an unregenerate world. The judgment passed upon this set of poems at the time by the *Critical Review* seems blasphemous to the fond biographer, and is so devoid of modern smartness as to be almost interesting as a literary fossil. But it must be deemed essentially just, though the reviewer errs, as many reviewers have erred, in measuring the writer's capacity by the standard of his first performance. "These poems," said the *Critical Review*, "are written, as we learn from the title-page, by Mr. Cowper of the Inner Temple, who seems to be a man of a sober and religious turn of mind, with a benevolent heart, and a serious wish to inculcate the precepts of morality; he is not, however, possessed of any superior abilities or the power of genius requisite for so arduous an undertaking. . . . He says what is incontrovertible, and what has been said over and over again with much gravity, but says nothing new, sprightly, or entertaining; travelling on a plain, level, flat road, with great composure almost through the whole long and tedious volume, which is little better than a dull sermon in very indifferent verse on Truth, the Progress of Error, Charity, and some other grave subjects. If this author had followed the advice given by Caraccioli, and which he has chosen for one of the mottoes prefixed to these poems, he would have clothed his indisputable truths in some more becoming disguise, and rendered his work much more agreeable. In its present shape we cannot compliment him on its beauty; for as this bard himself sweetly sings:

"'The clear harangue, and cold as it is clear,
Falls soporific on the listless ear.'"

In justice to the bard it ought to be said that he wrote under the eye of the Rev. John Newton, to whom the design had been duly submitted, and who had given his *imprimatur* in the shape of a preface which took Johnson, the publisher, aback by its gravity. Newton would not have sanctioned any poetry which had not a distinctly religious object, and he received an assurance from the poet that the lively passages were introduced only as honey on the rim of the medicinal cup, to commend its healing contents to the lips of a giddy world. The Rev. John Newton must have been exceedingly austere if he thought that the quantity of honey used was excessive.

A genuine desire to make society better is always present in these poems, and its presence lends them the only interest which they possess except as historical monuments of a religious movement. Of satirical vigor they have scarcely a semblance. There are three kinds of satire, corresponding to as many different views of humanity and life; the Stoical, the Cynical, and the Epicurean. Of Stoical satire, with its strenuous hatred of vice and wrong, the type is Juvenal. Of Cynical satire, springing from bitter contempt of humanity, the type is Swift's Gulliver, while its quintessence is embodied in his lines on the Day of Judgment. Of Epicurean satire, flowing from a contempt of humanity which is not bitter, and lightly playing with the weakness and vanities of mankind, Horace is the classical example. To the first two kinds, Cowper's nature was totally alien, and when he attempts anything in either of those lines, the only result is a querulous and censorious acerbity, in which his real feelings had no part, and which on mature reflection offended his own better taste. In the Horatian kind he might have excelled, as the episode of the *Retired Statesman* in one of these poems shows. He might have excelled, that is, if like Horace he had known the world. But he did not know the world. He saw the "great Babel" only "through the loopholes of retreat," and in the columns of his weekly newspaper. Even during the years, long past, which he spent in the world, his experience had been confined to a small literary circle. Society was to him an abstraction on which he discoursed like a pulpiteer. His satiric whip not only has no lash, it is brandished in the air.

No man was ever less qualified for the office of a censor; his judgment is at once disarmed, and a breach in his principles is at once made by the slightest personal influence. Bishops are bad; they are like the Cretans, evil beasts and slow bellies; but the bishop whose brother Cowper knows is a blessing to the Church. Deans and Canons are lazy sinecurists, but there is a bright exception in the case of the Cowper who held a golden stall at Durham. Grinding India is criminal, but Warren Hastings is acquitted, because he was with Cowper at Westminster. Discipline was deplorably relaxed in all colleges except that of which Cowper's brother was a fellow. Pluralities and resignation bonds, the grossest abuses of the Church, were perfectly defensible in the case of any friend or acquaintance of this Church Reformer. Bitter lines against Popery inserted in *The Task* were struck out, because the writer had made the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Throckmorton, who were Roman Catholics. Smoking was detestable, except when practised by dear Mr. Bull. Even gambling, the blackest sin of fashionable society, is not to prevent Fox, the great Whig, from being a ruler in Israel. Besides, in all his social judgments, Cowper is at a wrong point of view. He is always deluded by the idol of his cave. He writes perpetually on the twofold assumption that a life of retirement is more favorable to virtue than a life of action, and that "God made the country, while man made the town." Both parts of the assumption are untrue. A life of action is more favorable to virtue, as a rule, than a life of retirement, and the development of humanity is higher and richer, as a rule, in the town than in the country. If Cowper's retirement was virtuous, it was so because he was actively employed in the exercise of his highest faculties: had he been a mere idler, secluded from his kind, his retirement would not have been virtuous at all. His flight, from the world was rendered necessary by his malady, and respectable by his literary work; but it was a flight and not a victory. His misconception was fostered and partly produced by a religion which was essentially ascetic, and which, while it gave birth to characters of the highest and most energetic beneficence, represented salvation too little as the reward of effort, too much as the reward of passive belief and of spiritual emotion.

The most readable of the Moral Satires is *Retirement*, in which the writer is on his own ground, expressing his genuine feelings, and which is, in fact, a foretaste of *The Task*. *Expostulation*, a warning to England from the example of the Jews, is the best constructed; the rest are totally wanting in unity, and even in connection. In all there are flashes of epigrammatic smartness.

"How shall I speak thee, or thy power address,
Thou God of our idolatry, the press?
By thee, religion, liberty, and laws
Exert their influence, and advance their cause;
By thee, worse plagues than Pharaoh's land befell,
Diffused, make earth the vestibule of hell:
Thou fountain. at which drink the good and wise
Thou ever-bubbling spring of endless lies,
Like Eden's dread probationary tree,
Knowledge of good and evil is from thee."

Occasionally there are passages of higher merit. The episode of statesmen in *Retirement* has been already mentioned. The lines on the two disciples going to Emmaus in *Conversation*, though little more than a paraphrase of the Gospel narrative, convey pleasantly the Evangelical idea of the Divine Friend. Cowper says in one of his letters that he had been intimate with a man of fine taste who had confessed to him that though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, he could never read this passage of St. Luke without being deeply affected by it, and feeling that if the stamp of divinity was impressed upon anything in the Scriptures, it was upon that passage.

"It happen'd on a solemn eventide,
Soon after He that was our surety died,
Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,
The scene of all those sorrows left behind,
Sought their own village, busied as they went
In musings worthy of the great event:
They spake of him they loved, of him whose life,
Though blameless, had incurr'd perpetual strife,
Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,
A deep memorial graven on their hearts.

The recollection, like a vein of ore,
The farther traced enrich'd them still the more;
They thought him, and they justly thought him, one
Sent to do more than he appear'd to have done,
To exalt a people, and to place them high
Above all else, and wonder'd he should die.
Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,
A stranger join'd them, courteous as a friend,
And ask'd them with a kind engaging air
What their affliction was, and begg'd a share.
Inform'd he gather'd up the broken thread,
And truth and wisdom gracing all he said,
Explain'd, illustrated, and search'd so well
The tender theme on which they chose to dwell,
That reaching home, the night, they said is near,
We must not now be parted, sojourn here.—
The new acquaintance soon became a guest,
And made so welcome at their simple feast,
He bless'd the bread, but vanish'd at the word,
And left them both exclaiming, 'Twas the Lord!
Did not our hearts feel all he deign'd to say,
Did they not burn within us by the way?"

The prude going to morning church in *Truth* is a good rendering of Hogarth's picture:

"Yon ancient prude, whose wither'd features show
She might be young some forty years ago,
Her elbows pinion'd close upon her hips,
Her head erect, her fan upon her lips,
Her eyebrows arch'd, her eyes both gone astray
To watch yon amorous couple in their play,
With bony and unkerchief'd neck defies
The rude inclemency of wintry skies,
And sails with lappet-head and mincing airs
Daily, at clink of bell, to morning prayers.
To thrift and parsimony much inclined,
She yet allows herself that boy behind;
The shivering urchin, bending as he goes,
With slipshod heels, and dew-drop at his nose,
His predecessor's coat advanced to wear,
Which future pages are yet doom'd to share;
Carries her Bible tuck'd beneath his arm,
And hides his hands to keep his fingers warm."

Of personal allusions there are a few; if the satirist had not been prevented from indulging in them by his taste, he would have been debarred by his ignorance. Lord Chesterfield, as the incarnation of the world and the most brilliant servant of the arch-enemy, comes in for a lashing under the name of Petronius.

"Petronius! all the muses weep for thee,
But every tear shall scald thy memory.
The graces too, while virtue at their shrine
Lay bleeding under that soft hand of thine,
Felt each a mortal stab in her own breast,
Abhorr'd the sacrifice, and cursed the priest.
Thou polish'd and high-finish'd foe to truth,
Gray-beard corrupter of our listening youth,

> To purge and skim away the filth of vice,
> That so refined it might the more entice,
> Then pour it on the morals of thy son
> To taint *his* heart, was worthy of *thine own*."

This is about the nearest approach to Juvenal that the Evangelical satirist ever makes. In *Hope* there is a vehement vindication of the memory of Whitefield. It is rather remarkable that there is no mention of Wesley. But Cowper belonged to the Evangelical rather than to the Methodist section. It may be doubted whether the living Whitefield would have been much to his taste.

In the versification of the moral satires there are frequent faults, especially in the earlier poems of the series; though Cowper's power of writing musical verse is attested both by the occasional poems and by *The Task*.

With the Moral Satires may be coupled, though written later, *Tirocinium; or a Review of Schools*. Here Cowper has the advantage of treating a subject which he understood, about which he felt strongly, and desired for a practical purpose to stir the feelings of his readers. He set to work in bitter earnest. "There is a sting," he says, "in verse that prose neither has nor can have; and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abonination, and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should be opened, if possible, to perceive it." His descriptions of the miseries which children in his day endured, and, in spite of all our improvements, must still to some extent endure, in boarding-schools, and of the effects of the system in estranging boys from their parents and deadening home affections, are vivid and true. Of course, the Public School system was not to be overturned by rhyming, but the author of *Tirocinium* awakened attention to its faults, and probably did something towards amending them. The best lines, perhaps, have been already quoted in connection with the history of the writer's boyhood. There are, however, other telling passages, such as that on the indiscriminate use of emulation as a stimulus:

> "Our public hives of puerile resort
> That are of chief and most approved report,
> To such base hopes in many a sordid soul
> Owe their repute in part, but not the whole.
> A principle, whose proud pretensions pass
> Unquestion'd, though the jewel be but glass,
> That with a world not often over-nice
> Ranks as a virtue, and is yet a vice,
> Or rather a gross compound, justly tried,
> Of envy, hatred, jealousy, and pride,
> Contributes most perhaps to enhance their fame,
> And Emulation is its precious name.
> Boys once on fire with that contentious zeal
> Feel all the rage that female rivals feel;
> The prize of beauty in a woman's eyes
> Not brighter than in theirs the scholar's prize.

The spirit of that competition burns
With all varieties of ill by turns,
Each vainly magnifies his own success,
Resents his fellow's, wishes it were less,
Exults in his miscarriage if he fail,
Deems his reward too great if he prevail,
And labors to surpass him day and night,
Less for improvement than to tickle spite.
The spur is powerful, and I grant its force;
It pricks the genius forward in its course,
Allows short time for play, and none for sloth,
And felt alike by each, advances both,
But judge where so much evil intervenes,
The end, though plausible, not worth the means.
Weigh, for a moment, classical desert
Against a heart depraved and temper hurt,
Hurt, too, perhaps for life, for early wrong
Done to the nobler part, affects it long,
And you are stanch indeed in learning's cause,
If you can crown a discipline that draws
Such mischiefs after it, with much applause."

He might have done more, if he had been able to point to the alternative of a good day-school, as a combination of home affections with the superior teachings hardly to be found, except in a large school, and which Cowper, in drawing his comparison between the two systems, fails to take into account.

To the same general class of poems belongs *Anti-Thelypthora*, which it is due to Cowper's memory to say was not published in his lifetime. It is an angry pasquinade on an absurd book advocating polygamy on Biblical grounds, by the Rev. Martin Madan, Cowper's quondam spiritual counsellor. Alone among Cowper's works it has a taint of coarseness.

The Moral Satires pleased Franklin, to whom their social philosophy was congenial, as at a later day, in common with all Cowper's works, they pleased Cobden, who no doubt specially relished the passage in *Charity*, embodying the philanthropic sentiment of Free Trade. There was a trembling consultation as to the expediency of bringing the volume under the notice of Johnson. "One of his pointed sarcasms, if he should happen to be displeased, would soon find its way into all companies, and spoil the sale." "I think it would be well to send in our joint names, accompanied with a handsome card, such an one as you will know how to fabricate, and such as may predispose him to a favorable perusal of the book, by coaxing him into a good temper; for he is a great bear, with all his learning and penetration." Fear prevailed; but it seems that the book found its way into the dictator's hands, that his judgment on it was kind, and that he even did something to temper the wind of adverse criticism to the shorn lamb. Yet parts of it were likely to incur his displeasure as a Tory, as a Churchman, and as one who greatly preferred Fleet Street to the beauties of nature; while with the sentimental misery of the writer, he could have had no sympathy whatever. Of the incompleteness of

Johnson's view of character there could be no better instance than the charming weakness of Cowper. Thurlow and Colman did not even acknowledge their copies, and were lashed for their breach of friendship with rather more vigor than the Moral Satires display, in *The Valedictory*, which unluckily survived for posthumous publication when the culprits had made their peace.

Cowper certainly misread himself if he believed that ambition, even literary ambition, was a large element in his character. But having published, he felt a keen interest in the success of his publication. Yet he took its failure and the adverse criticism very calmly. With all his sensitiveness, from irritable and suspicious egotism, such as is the most common cause of moral madness, he was singularly free. In this respect his philosophy served him well.

It may safely be said that the Moral Satires would have sunk into oblivion if they had not been buoyed up by *The Task.*

CHAPTER V.

THE TASK.

MRS. UNWIN'S influence produced the Moral Satires. *The Task* was born of a more potent inspiration. One day Mrs. Jones, the wife of a neighboring clergyman, came into Olney to shop, and with her came her sister, Lady Austen, the widow of a Baronet, a woman of the world, who had lived much in France, gay, sparkling and vivacious, but at the same time full of feeling even to overflowing. The apparition acted like Magic on the recluse. He desired Mrs. Unwin to ask the two ladies to stay to tea; then shrank from joining the party which he had himself invited; ended by joining it, and, his shyness giving way with a rush, engaged in animated conversation with Lady Austen, and walked with her part of the way home. On her an equally great effect appears to have been produced. A warm friendship at once sprang up, and before long Lady Austen had verses addressed to her as Sister Anne. Her ladyship, on her part, was smitten with a great love of retirement, and at the same time with great admiration for Mr. Scott, the curate of Olney, as a preacher, and she resolved to fit up for herself "that part of our great building which is at present occupied by Dick Coleman, his wife and child, and a thousand rats." That a woman of fashion, accustomed to French salons, should choose such an abode, with a pair of Puritans for her only society, seems to show that one of the Puritans at least must have possessed great powers of attraction. Better quarters were found for her in the Vicarage; and the private way between the gardens, which apparently had been closed since Newton's departure, was opened again.

Lady Austen's presence evidently wrought on Cowper like an elixir: "From a scene of the most uninterrupted retirement," he writes to Mrs. Unwin, "we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement. Not that our society is much multiplied; the addition of an individual has made all this difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's Chateau. In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies, and in the evening wind thread. Thus did Hercules, and thus probably did Samson, and thus do I; and, were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill in that business, or doubt to beat them both." It was, perhaps, while he was winding thread that Lady Austen told him the story of John Gilpin. He lay awake at night laughing over it, and next morning produced the ballad. It soon became famous, and was recited by Henderson, a popular actor, on the stage, though, as its gentility was doubtful, its author withheld his name. He afterwards fancied that this wonderful piece of humor had been written in a mood of the deepest depression. Probably he had written it in an interval of high spirits between two such moods. Moreover, he sometimes exaggerated his own misery. He will begin a letter with a *de profundis*, and towards the end forget his sorrows, glide into commonplace topics, and write about them in the ordinary strain. Lady Austen inspired *John Gilpin*. She inspired, it seems, the lines on the loss of the Royal George. She did more: she invited Cowper to try his hand at something considerable in blank verse. When he asked her for a subject, she was happier in her choice than the lady who had suggested the *Progress of Error*. She bade him take the sofa on which she was reclining, and which, sofas being then uncommon, was a more striking and suggestive object than it would be now. The right chord was struck; the subject was accepted; and *The Sofa* grew into *The Task*; the title of the song reminding us that it was "commanded by the fair." As *Paradise Lost* is to militant Puritanism, so is *The Task* to the religious movement of its author's time. To its character as the poem of a sect it no doubt owed and still owes much of its popularity. Not only did it give beautiful and effective expression to the sentiments of a large religious party, but it was about the only poetry that a strict Methodist or Evangelical could read; while to those whose worship was unritualistic, and who were debarred by their principles from the theatre and the concert, anything in the way of art that was not illicit must have been eminently welcome. But *The Task* has merits of a more universal and enduring kind. Its author himself says of it: "If the work cannot boast a regular plan (in which respect, however, I do not think it altogether indefensible), it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that, except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency, to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue." A regular plan, assuredly, *The Task* has not. It rambles through a vast variety of subjects, religious, political, social, philosophical, and horticultural, with as little of method as its author used in taking his morning walks. Nor, as Mr. Benham has shown, are the reflections, as a rule, naturally suggested by the preceding passage. From the use of a sofa by the gouty to those who, being free from gout, do not need sofas—and so to country walks and country life, is hardly a natural transition. It is hardly a natural transition from the ice palace built by a Russian despot, to despotism and politics in general. But if Cowper deceives himself in fancying that there is a plan or a close connection of parts, he is right as to the existence of a pervading tendency. The praise of retirement and of country life as most friendly to piety and virtue, is the perpetual refrain of *The Task*, if not its definite theme. From this idea immediately flow the best and the most popular passages: those which please apart from anything peculiar to a religious school; those which keep the poem alive; those which have found their way into the heart of the nation, and intensified the taste for rural and domestic happiness, to which they most winningly appeal. In these Cowper pours out his inmost feelings, with the liveliness of exhilaration, enhanced by contrast with previous misery. The pleasures of the country and of home—the walk, the garden, but above all the "intimate delights" of the winter evening, the snug parlor, with its close-drawn curtains shutting out the stormy night, the steaming and bubbling tea-urn, the cheerful circle, the book read aloud, the newspaper through which we look out into the unquiet world—are painted by the writer with a heartfelt enjoyment which infects the reader. These are not the joys of a hero, nor are they the joys of an Alcæus "singing amidst the clash of arms, or when he had moored on the wet shore his storm-tost barque." But they are pure joys, and they present themselves in competition with those of Ranelagh and the Basset Table, which are not heroic or even masculine, any more than they are pure.

The well-known passages at the opening of *The Winter Evening* are the self-portraiture of a soul in bliss—such bliss as that soul could know—and the poet would have found it very difficult to depict to himself by the utmost effort of his religious imagination any paradise which he would really have enjoyed more.

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

. . . . . .

This folio of four pages, happy work!

Which not even critics criticise, that holds
Inquisitive attention while I read
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break,
What is it but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations and its vast concerns?

. . . . . .

'Tis pleasant through the loopholes of retreat
To peep at such a world. To see the stir
Of the great Babel and not feel the crowd.
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on the injured ear.
Thus sitting and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced
To some secure and more than mortal height,
That liberates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations; I behold
The tumult and am still. The sound of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me,
Grieves but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And avarice that make man a wolf to man,
Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flower to flower, so he from land to land;
The manners, customs, policy of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans;
He sucks intelligence in every clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return, a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes and share in his escapes,
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.
Oh, winter! ruler of the inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age; thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car indebted to no wheels,
And urged by storms along its slippery way;
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art. Thou hold'st the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning East,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon.
And hurrying him impatient of his stay
Down to the rosy West. But kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering at short notice in one group
The family dispersed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturb'd retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know."

The writer of *The Task* also deserves the crown which he has himself claimed as a close observer and truthful painter of nature. In this respect, he challenges comparison with Thomson. The range of Thomson is far wider; he paints nature in all her moods, Cowper only in a few, and those the gentlest, though he has said of himself that "he was always an admirer of thunder-storms, even before he knew whose voice he heard in them, but especially of thunder rolling over the great waters." The great waters he had not seen for many years; he had never, so far as we know, seen mountains, hardly even high hills; his only landscape was the flat country watered by the Ouse. On the other hand, he is perfectly genuine, thoroughly English, entirely emancipated from false Arcadianism, the yoke of which still sits heavily upon Thomson, whose "muse," moreover, is perpetually "wafting" him away from the country and the climate which he knows to countries and climates which he does not know, and which he describes in the style of a prize poem. Cowper's landscapes, too, are peopled with the peasantry of England; Thomson's, with Damons, Palæmons, and Musidoras, tricked out in the sentimental costume of the sham idyl. In Thomson, you always find the effort of the artist working up a description; in Cowper, you find no effort; the scene is simply mirrored on a mind of great sensibility and high pictorial power.

"And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure such as love,
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth
And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire—
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjured up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While Admiration, feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene!
Thence with what pleasure have we just discerned
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His laboring team that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlook'd, our favorite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells

Just undulates upon the listening ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote.
Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily viewed,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years—
Praise justly due to those that I describe."

This is evidently genuine and spontaneous. We stand with Cowper and Mrs. Unwin on the hill in the ruffling wind, like them, scarcely conscious that it blows, and feed admiration at the eye upon the rich and thoroughly English champaign that is outspread below.

"Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid Nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, *make music not unlike*
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind;
Unnumber'd branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast fluttering, all at once.
Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighboring fountain, or of *rills that slip*
Through the cleft rock, *and chiming as they fall*
Upon loose pebbles, *lose themselves at length*
In matted grass that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated nature sweeter still,
To soothe and satisfy the human ear.
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The livelong night: nor these alone, whose notes
Nice-finger'd Art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still-repeated circles, screaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and e'en the boding owl
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace forever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake."

Affection such as the last lines display for the inharmonious as well as the harmonious, for the uncomely as well as the comely parts of nature, has been made familiar by Wordsworth, but it was new in the time of Cowper. Let us compare a landscape painted by Pope in his Windsor Forest, with the lines just quoted, and we shall see the difference between the art of Cowper and that of the Augustan age.

"Here waving groves a checkered scene display,
And part admit and part exclude the day,
As some coy nymph her lover's warm address
Not quite indulges, nor can quite repress.
There interspersed in lawns and opening glades
The trees arise that share each other's shades;
Here in full light the russet plains extend,
There wrapt in clouds, the bluish hills ascend,

E'en the wild heath displays her purple dyes,
And midst the desert fruitful fields arise,
That crowned with tufted trees and springing corn,
Like verdant isles the sable waste adorn."

The low Berkshire hills wrapt in clouds on a sunny day; a sable desert in the neighborhood of Windsor; fruitful fields arising in it, and crowned with tufted trees and springing corn—evidently Pope saw all this, not on an eminence, in the ruffling wind, but in his study with his back to the window, and the Georgics or a translation of them before him.

Here, again, is a little picture of rural life from the *Winter Morning Walk.*

"The cattle mourn in corners, where the fence
Screens them, and seem half-petrified to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait
Their wonted fodder; not like hungering man,
Fretful if unsupplied; but silent, meek,
And patient of the slow-paced swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out the accustomed load.
Deep-plunging, and again deep plunging oft,
His broad keen knife into the solid mass:
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force
He severs it away: no needless care,
Lest storms should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcern'd
The cheerful haunts of man; to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve, his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropp'd short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a frisk
Wide-scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,
But now and then with pressure of his thumb
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air."

The minutely faithful description of the man carving the load of hay out of the stack, and again those of the gambolling dog, and the woodman smoking his pipe with the stream of smoke trailing behind him, remind us of the touches of minute fidelity in Homer. The same may be said of many other passages.

"The sheepfold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At first, progressive as a stream they seek
The middle field; but, scatter'd by degrees,
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.

There from the sunburnt hay-field homeward creeps
The loaded wain; while lighten'd of its charge,
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by:
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
Vociferous and impatient of delay."

A specimen of more imaginative and distinctly poetical description is the well-known passage on evening, in writing which Cowper would seem to have had Collins in his mind.

"Come, Evening, once again, season of peace;
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron-step slow-moving, while the Night
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employed
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day:
Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid,
Like homely-featured Night, of clustering gems!
A star or two just twinkling on thy brow
Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round."

Beyond this line Cowper does not go, and had no idea of going; he never thinks of lending a soul to material nature as Wordsworth and Shelley do. He is the poetic counterpart of Gainsborough, as the great descriptive poets of a later and more spiritual day are the counterparts of Turner. We have said that Cowper's peasants are genuine as well as his landscape; he might have been a more exquisite Crabbe if he had turned his mind that way, instead of writing sermons about a world which to him was little more than an abstraction, distorted, moreover, and discolored by his religious asceticism.

"Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warm'd, while it lasts, by labor, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad, and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left, she nurses well;
And, while her infant race, with outspread hands
And crowded knees sit cowering o'er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd.
The man feels least, as more inured than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly moved by his severer toil;
Yet he, too, finds his own distress in theirs.
The taper soon extinguish'd, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declined; and the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten without sauce
Of savory cheese, or butter, costlier still;

Sleep seems their only refuge: for, alas!
Where penury is felt the thought is chained,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few!
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care
Ingenious Parsimony takes, but just
Saves the small inventory, bed and stool,
Skillet, and old carved chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands: but other boast have none
To soothe their honest pride that scorns to beg,
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love."

Here we have the plain, unvarnished record of visitings among the poor of Olney. The last two lines are simple truth as well as the rest.

"In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical." In the second book of *The Task* there are some bitter things about the clergy; and in the passage portraying a fashionable preacher, there is a touch of satiric vigor, or rather of that power of comic description which was one of the writer's gifts. But of Cowper as a satirist enough has been said.

"What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons: first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance; and, secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of conscience." The passages of *The Task* penned by conscience, taken together, form a lamentably large proportion of the poem. An ordinary reader can be carried through them, if at all, only by his interest in the history of opinion, or by the companionship of the writer, who is always present, as Walton is in his Angler, as White is in his Selbourne. Cowper, however, even at his worst, is a highly-cultivated Methodist; if he is sometimes enthusiastic, and possibly superstitious, he is never coarse or unctuous. He speaks with contempt of "the twang of the conventicle." Even his enthusiasm had by this time been somewhat tempered. Just after his conversion he used to preach to everybody. He had found out, as he tells us himself, that this was a mistake, that "the pulpit was for preaching; the garden, the parlor, and the walk abroad were for friendly and agreeable conversation." It may have been his consciousness of a certain change in himself that deterred him from taking Newton into his confidence when he was engaged upon *The Task*. The worst passages are those which betray a fanatical antipathy to natural science, especially that in the third book (150–190). The episode of the judgment of Heaven on the young atheist Misagathus, in the sixth book, is also fanatical and repulsive.

Puritanism had come into violent collision with the temporal power, and had contracted a character fiercely political and revolutionary, Methodism fought only against unbelief, vice, and the coldness of the Establishment; it was in no way political, much less revolutionary; by the recoil from the atheism of the French Revolution, its leaders, including Wesley himself, were drawn rather to the Tory side. Cowper, we have said, always remained in principle what he had been born, a Whig, an unrevolutionary Whig, an "Old Whig," to adopt the phrase made canonical by Burke.

> " 'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
> Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
> And we are weeds without it. All constraint
> Except what wisdom lays on evil men
> Is evil."

The sentiment of these lines, which were familiar and dear to Cobden, is tempered by judicious professions of loyalty to a king who rules in accordance with the law. At one time Cowper was inclined to regard the government of George III. as a repetition of that of Charles I., absolutist in the State and reactionary in the Church; but the progress of revolutionary opinions evidently increased his loyalty, as it did that of many other Whigs, to the good Tory king. We shall presently see, however, that the views of the French Revolution itself expressed in his letters are wonderfully rational, calm, and free from the political panic and the apocalyptic hallucination, both of which we should rather have expected to find in him. He describes himself to Newton as having seen, since his second attack of madness, "an extramundane character with reference to this globe, and though not a native of the moon, not made of the dust of this planet." The Evangelical party has remained down to the present day non-political, and in its own estimation extramundane, taking part in the affairs of the nation only when some religious object was directly in view. In speaking of the family of nations, an Evangelical poet is of course a preacher of peace and human brotherhood. He has even in some lines of *Charity*, which also were dear to Cobden, remarkably anticipated the sentiment of modern economists respecting the influence of free trade in making one nation of mankind. The passage is defaced by an atrociously bad simile:

> " Again—the band of commerce was design'd,
> To associate all the branches of mankind,
> And if a boundless plenty be the robe,
> Trade is the golden girdle of the globe.
> Wise to promote whatever end he means,
> God opens fruitful Nature's various scenes,
> Each climate needs what other climes produce,
> And offers something to the general use;
> No land but listens to the common call,
> And in return receives supply from all.
> This genial intercourse and mutual aid
> Cheers what were else an universal shade,
> Calls Nature from her ivy-mantled den,
> And softens human rock-work into men."

Now and then, however, in reading *The Task*, we come across a dash of warlike patriotism which, amidst the general philanthropy, surprises and offends the reader's palate, like the taste of garlic in our butter.

An innocent Epicurism, tempered by religious asceticism of a mild kind—such is the philosophy of *The Task*, and such the ideal embodied in the portrait of the happy man with which it concludes. Whatever may be said of the religious asceticism, the Epicurism required a corrective to redeem it from selfishness and guard it against self-deceit. This solitary was serving humanity in the best way he could, not by his prayers, as in one rather fanatical passage he suggests, but by his literary work; he had need also to remember that humanity was serving him. The newspaper through which he looks out so complacently into the great "Babel," has been printed in the great Babel itself, and brought by the poor postman, with his "spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks," to the recluse sitting comfortably by his fireside. The "fragrant lymph" poured by "the fair" for their companion in his cosey seclusion, has been brought over the sea by the trader, who must encounter the moral dangers of a trader's life, as well as the perils of the stormy wave. It is delivered at the door by

"The wagoner who bears
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes and puckered cheeks and teeth
Presented bare against the storm;"

and whose coarseness and callousness, as he whips his team, are the consequences of the hard calling in which he ministers to the recluse's pleasure and refinement. If town life has its evils, from the city comes all that makes retirement comfortable and civilized. Retirement without the city would have been bookless, and have fed on acorns.

Rousseau is conscious of the necessity of some such institution as slavery, by way of basis for his beautiful life according to nature. The celestial purity and felicity of St. Pierre's *Paul and Virginia* are sustained by the labor of two faithful slaves. A weak point of Cowper's philosophy, taken apart from his own saving activity as a poet, betrays itself in a somewhat similar way.

"Or if the garden with its many cares
All well repaid demand him, he attends
The welcome call, conscious how much the hand
Of lubbard labor needs his watchful eye,
Oft loitering lazily if not o'erseen;
Or misapplying his unskilful strength
But much performs himself, *no works indeed*
That ask robust tough sinews bred to toil,
Servile employ, but such as may amuse,
Not tire, demanding rather skill than force."

We are told in *The Task* that there is no sin in allowing our own happiness to be enhanced by contrast with the less happy condition of others; if we are doing our best to increase the happiness of others, there is none. Cowper, as we have said before, was doing this to the utmost of his limited capacity.

Both in the Moral Satires and in *The Task*, there are sweeping denunciations of amusements which we now justly deem innocent, and without which, or something equivalent to them, the wrinkles on the brow of care could not be smoothed, nor life preserved from dulness and moroseness. There is fanaticism in this, no doubt; but in justice to the Methodist as well as to the Puritan, let it be remembered that the stage, card parties, and even dancing, once had in them something from which even the most liberal morality might recoil.

In his writings generally, but especially in *The Task*, Cowper, besides being an apostle of virtuous retirement and evangelical piety, is, by his general tone, an apostle of sensibility. *The Task* is a perpetual protest not only against the fashionable vices and the irreligion but against the hardness of the world; and in a world which worshipped Chesterfield the protest was not needless, nor was it ineffective. Among the most tangible characteristics of this special sensibility is the tendency of its brimming love of humankind to overflow upon animals; and of this there are marked instances in some passages of *The Task.*

> "I would not enter on my list of friends
> (Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
> Yet wanting sensibility) the man
> Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm."

Of Cowper's sentimentalism (to use the word in a neutral sense), part flowed from his own temperament, part was Evangelical, but part belonged to an element which was European, which produced the *Nouvelle Heloise* and the *Sorrows of Werther*, and which was found among the Jacobins in sinister companionship with the cruel frenzy of the Revolution. Cowper shows us several times that he had been a reader of Rousseau, nor did he fail to produce in his time a measure of the same effect which Rousseau produced; though there have been so many sentimentalists since, and the vein has been so much worked, that it is difficult to carry ourselves back in imagination to the day in which Parisian ladies could forego balls to read the *Nouvelle Heloise*, or the stony heart of people of the world could be melted by *The Task.*

In his versification, as in his descriptions, Cowper flattered himself that he imitated no one. But he manifestly imitates the softer passages of Milton, whose music he compares in a rapturous passage of one of his letters to that of a fine organ. To produce melody and variety, he, like Milton, avails himself fully of all the resources of a composite language. Blank verse confined to short Anglo-Saxon words is apt to strike the ear, not like the swell of an organ, but like the tinkle of a musical-box.

The Task made Cowper famous. He was told that he had sixty readers at the Hague alone. The interest of his relations and friends in him revived, and those of whom he had heard nothing for many years emulously renewed their connection. Colman and Thurlow reopened their correspondence with him, Colman writing to him "like a brother." Disciples—young Mr. Rose, for instance—came to sit at his feet. Complimentary letters were sent to him, and poems submitted to his judgment. His portrait was taken by famous painters. Literary lion-hunters began to fix their eyes upon him. His renown spread even to Olney. The clerk of All Saints', Northampton, came over to ask him to write the verses annually appended to the bill of mortality for that parish. Cowper suggested that "there were several men of genius in Northampton, particularly Mr. Cox, the statuary, who, as everybody knew, was a first-rate maker of verses." "Alas!" replied the clerk, "I have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so much reading that the people of our town cannot understand him." The compliment was irresistible, and for seven years the author of *The Task* wrote the mortuary verses for All Saints', Northampton. Amusement, not profit, was Cowper's aim; he rather rashly gave away his copyright to his publisher, and his success does not seem to have brought him money in a direct way; but it brought him a pension of 300*l.* in the end. In the mean time it brought him presents, and among them an annual gift of 50*l.* from an anonymous hand, the first instalment being accompanied by a pretty snuff-box ornamented with a picture of the three hares. From the gracefulness of the gift, Southey infers that it came from a woman, and he conjectures that the woman was Theodora.

CHAPTER VI.

SHORT POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS.

The Task was not quite finished when the influence which had inspired it was withdrawn. Among the little mysteries and scandals of literary history is the rupture between Cowper and Lady Austen. Soon after the commencement of their friendship there had been a "fracas," of which Cowper gives an account in a letter to William Unwin. "My letters have already apprised you of that close and intimate connection that took place between the lady you visited in Queen Anne Street and us. Nothing could be more promising, though sudden in the commencement. She treated us with as much unreservedness of communication, as if we had been born in the same house and educated together. At her departure, she herself proposed a correspondence, and, because writing does not agree with your mother, proposed a correspondence with me. This sort of intercourse had not been long maintained before I discovered, by some slight intimations of it, that she had conceived displeasure at somewhat I had written, though I cannot now recollect it; conscious of none but the most upright, inoffensive intentions, I yet apologized for the passage in question, and the flaw was healed again. Our correspondence after this proceeded smoothly for a considerable time; but at length, having had repeated occasion to observe that she expressed a sort of romantic idea of our merits, and built such expectations of felicity upon our friendship, as we were sure that nothing human could possibly answer, I wrote to remind her that we were mortal, to recommend her not to think more highly of us than the subject would warrant, and intimating that when we embellish a creature with colors taken from our own fancy, and, so adorned, admire and praise it beyond its real merits, we make it an idol, and have nothing to expect in the end but that it will deceive our hopes, and that we shall derive nothing from it but a painful conviction of our error. Your mother heard me read the letter; she read it herself, and honored it with her warm approbation. But it gave mortal offence; it received, indeed, an answer, but such an one as I could by no means reply to; and there ended (for it was impossible it should ever be renewed) a friendship that bid fair to be lasting; being formed with a woman whose seeming stability of temper, whose knowledge of the world and great experience of its folly, but, above all, whose sense of religion and seriousness of mind (for with all that gayety she is a great thinker) induced us both, in spite of that cautious reserve that marked our characters, to trust her, to love and value her, and to open our hearts for her reception. It may be necessary to add that, by her own desire, I wrote to her under the assumed relation of a brother, and she to me as my sister. *Ceu fumus in auras.*" It is impossible to read this without suspecting that there was more of "romance" on one side than there was either of romance or of consciousness of the situation on the other. On that occasion the reconciliation, though "impossible," took place, the lady sending, by way of olive branch, a pair of ruffles, which it was known she had begun to work before the quarrel. The second rupture was final. Hayley, who treats the matter with sad solemnity, tells us that Cowper's letter of farewell to Lady Austen, as she assured him herself, was admirable, though unluckily, not being gratified by it at the time, she had thrown it into the fire. Cowper has himself given us, in a letter to Lady Hesketh, with reference to the final rupture, a version of the whole affair: "There came a lady into this country, by name and title Lady Austen, the widow of the late Sir Robert Austen. At first she lived with her sister about a mile from Olney; but in a few weeks took lodgings at the Vicarage here. Between the Vicarage and the back of our house are interposed our garden, an orchard, and the garden belonging to the Vicarage. She had lived much in France, was very sensible, and had infinite vivacity. She took a great liking to us, and we to her. She had been used to a great deal of company, and we, fearing that she would feel such a transition into silent retirement irksome, contrived to give her our agreeable company often. Becoming continually more and more intimate, a practice at length obtained of our dining with each other alternately every day, Sundays excepted. In order to facilitate our communication, we made doors in the two garden-walls aforesaid, by which means we considerably shortened the way from one house to the other, and could meet when we pleased without entering the town at all—a measure the rather expedient, because the town is abominably dirty, and she kept no carriage. On her first settlement in our neighborhood, I made it my own particular business (for at that time I was not employed in writing, having published my first volume and not begun my second) to pay my *devoirs* to her ladyship every morning at eleven. Customs very soon became laws. I began *The Task*, for she was the lady who gave me the *Sofa* for a subject. Being once engaged in the work, I began to feel the inconvenience of my morning attendance. We had seldom breakfasted ourselves till ten; and the intervening hour was all the time I could find in the whole day for writing, and occasionally it would happen that the half of that hour was all that I could secure for the purpose. But there was no remedy. Long usage had made that which was at first optional a point of good manners, and consequently of necessity, and I was forced to neglect *The Task* to attend upon the Muse who had inspired the subject. But she had ill-health, and before I had quite finished the work was obliged to repair to Bristol." Evidently this was not the whole account of the matter, or there would have been no need for a formal letter of farewell. We are very sorry to find the revered Mr. Alexander Knox saying, in his correspondence with Bishop Jebb, that he had a severer idea of Lady Austen than he should wish to put into writing for publication, and that he almost suspected she was a very artful woman. On the other hand, the unsentimental Mr. Scott is reported to have said, "Who can be surprised that two women should be continually in the society of one man and not quarrel, sooner or later, with each other?" Considering what Mrs. Unwin had been to Cowper, and what he had been to her, a little jealousy on her part would not have been highly criminal. But, as Southey observes, we shall soon see two women continually in the society of this very man without quarrelling with each other. That Lady Austen's behavior to Mrs. Unwin was in the highest degree affectionate, Cowper has himself assured us. Whatever the cause may have been, this bird of paradise, having alighted for a moment in Olney, took wing and was seen no more.

Her place as a companion was supplied, and more than supplied, by Lady Hesketh, like her a woman of the world, and almost as bright and vivacious, but with more sense and stability of character, and who, moreover, could be treated as a sister without any danger of misunderstanding. The renewal of the intercourse between Cowper and the merry and affectionate play-fellow of his early days, had been one of the best fruits borne to him by *The Task*, or perhaps we should rather say by *John Gilpin;* for on reading that ballad she first became aware that her cousin had emerged from the dark seclusion of his truly Christian happiness, and might again be capable of intercourse with her sunny nature. Full of real happiness for Cowper were her visits to Olney; the announcement of her coming threw him into a trepidation of delight. And how was this new rival received by Mrs. Unwin? "There is something," says Lady Hesketh, in a letter which has been already quoted, "truly affectionate and sincere in Mrs. Unwin's manner. No one can express more heartily than she does her joy to have me at Olney; and as this must be for his sake, it is an additional proof of her regard and esteem for him." She could even cheerfully yield precedence in trifles, which is the greatest trial of all. "Our friend," says Lady Hesketh, "delights in a large table and a large chair. There are two of the latter comforts in my parlor. I am sorry to say that he and I always spread ourselves out in them, leaving poor Mrs. Unwin to find all the comfort she can in a small one, half as high again as ours, and considerably harder than marble. However, she protests it is what she likes, that she prefers a high chair to a low one, and a hard to a soft one; and I hope she is sincere; indeed, I am persuaded she is." She never gave the slightest reason for doubting her sincerity; so Mr. Scott's coarse theory of the "two women" falls to the ground; though, as Lady Hesketh was not Lady Austen, room is still left for the more delicate and interesting hypothesis.

By Lady Hesketh's care Cowper was at last taken out of the "well" at Olney and transferred, with his partner, to a house at Weston, a place in the neighborhood, but on higher ground, more cheerful, and in better air. The house at Weston belonged to Mr. Throckmorton, of Weston Hall, with whom and Mrs. Throckmorton, Cowper had become so intimate that they were already his Mr. and Mrs. Frog. It is a proof of his freedom from fanatical bitterness that he was rather drawn to them by their being Roman Catholics, and having suffered rude treatment from the Protestant boors of the neighborhood. Weston Hall had its grounds, with the colonnade of chestnuts, the "sportive light" of which still "dances" on the pages of *The Task;* with the Wilderness—

> "Whose well-rolled walks,
> With curvature of slow and easy sweep,
> Deception innocent, give ample space
> To narrow bounds—"

with the Grove—

> "Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
> We may discern the thresher at his task,
> Thump after thump resounds the constant flail
> That seems to swing uncertain, and yet falls
> Full on the destined ear. Wide flies the chaff,
> The rustling straw sends up a fragrant mist
> Of atoms, sparkling in the noonday beam."

A pretty little vignette, which the threshing-machine has now made antique. There were ramblings, picnics, and little dinner-parties. Lady Hesketh kept a carriage. Gayhurst, the seat of Mr. Wright, was visited, as well as Weston Hall; the life of the lonely pair was fast becoming social. The Rev. John Newton was absent in the flesh, but he was present in the spirit, thanks to the tattle of Olney. To show that he was, he addressed to Mrs. Unwin a letter of remonstrance on the serious change which had taken place in the habits of his spiritual children. It was answered by her companion, who in repelling the censure mingles the dignity of self-respect with a just appreciation of the censor's motives, in a style which showed that although he was sometimes mad, he was not a fool.

Having succeeded in one great poem, Cowper thought of writing another, and several subjects were started—*The Mediterranean*, *The Four Ages of Man*, *Yardley Oak*. *The Mediterranean* would not have suited him well if it was to be treated historically, for of history he was even more ignorant than most of those who have had the benefit of a classical education, being capable of believing that the Latin element of our language had come in with the Roman conquest. Of the *Four Ages* he wrote a fragment. Of *Yardley Oak* he wrote the opening; it was, apparently, to have been a survey of the countries in connection with an immemorial oak which stood in a neighboring chase. But he was forced to say that the mind of man was not a fountain but a cistern, and his was a broken one. He had expended his stock of materials for a long poem in *The Task.*

These, the sunniest days of Cowper's life, however, gave birth to many of those short poems which are perhaps his best, certainly his most popular works, and which will probably keep his name alive when *The Task* is read only in extracts. *The Loss of the Royal George*, *The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk*, *The Poplar Field*, *The Shrubbery*, the *Lines on a Young Lady*, and those *To Mary*, will hold their places forever in the treasury of English Lyrics. In its humble way *The Needless Alarm* is one of the most perfect of human compositions. Cowper had reason to complain of Æsop for having written his fables before him. One great charm of these little pieces is their perfect spontaneity. Many of them were never published; and generally they have the air of being the simple effusions of the moment, gay or sad. When Cowper was in good spirits his joy, intensified by sensibility and past suffering, played like a fountain of light on all the little incidents of his quiet life. An ink-glass, a flatting mill, a halibut served up for dinner, the killing of a snake in the garden, the arrival of a friend wet after a journey, a cat shut up in a drawer sufficed to elicit a little jet of poetical delight, the highest and brightest jet of all being *John Gilpin*. Lady Austen's voice and touch still faintly live in two or three pieces which were written for her harpsichord. Some of the short poems, on the other hand, are poured from the darker urn, and the finest of them all is the saddest. There is no need of illustrations unless it be to call attention to a secondary quality less noticed than those of more importance. That which used to be specially called "wit," the faculty of ingenious and unexpected combination, such as is shown in the similes of *Hudibras*, was possessed by Cowper in large measure.

> "A friendship that in frequent fits
> Of controversial rage emits
> The sparks of disputation,
> Like hand-in-hand insurance plates,
> Most unavoidably creates
> The thought of conflagration.
>
> "Some fickle creatures boast a soul
> True as a needle to the pole,
> Their humor yet so various—
> They manifest their whole life through
> The needle's deviations too,
> Their love is so precarious.
>
> "The great and small but rarely meet
> On terms of amity complete;
> Plebeians must surrender,
> And yield so much to noble folk,
> It is combining fire with smoke,
> Obscurity with splendor.
>
> "Some are so placid and serene
> (As Irish bogs are always green),
> They sleep secure from waking;
> And are indeed a bog, that bears
> Your unparticipated cares
> Unmoved and without quaking.
>
> "Courtier and patriot cannot mix
> Their heterogeneous politics
> Without an effervescence,
> Like that of salts with lemon juice,
> Which does not yet like that produce
> A friendly coalescence."

Faint presages of Byron are heard in such a poem as *The Shrubbery*; and of Wordsworth in such a poem as that *To a Young Lady*. But of the lyrical depth and passion of the great Revolution poets Cowper is wholly devoid. His soul was stirred by no movement so mighty, if it were even capable of the impulse. Tenderness he has, and pathos as well as playfulness; he has unfailing grace and ease; he has clearness like that of a trout-stream. Fashions, even our fashions, change. The more metaphysical poetry of our time has indeed too much in it, besides the metaphysics, to be in any danger of being ever laid on the shelf with the once admired conceits of Cowley; yet it may one day in part lose, while the easier and more limpid kind of poetry may in part regain, its charm.

The opponents of the Slave Trade tried to enlist this winning voice in the service of their cause. Cowper disliked the task, but he wrote two or three anti-Slave-Trade ballads. *The Slave Trader in the Dumps*, with its ghastly array of horrors dancing a jig to a ballad metre, justifies the shrinking of an artist from a subject hardly fit for art.

If the cistern which had supplied *The Task* was exhausted, the rill of occasional poems still ran freely, fed by a spring which, so long as life presented the most trivial object or incident, could not fail. Why did not Cowper go on writing these charming pieces, which he evidently produced with the greatest facility? Instead of this, he took, under an evil star, to translating Homer. The translation of Homer into verse is the Polar Expedition of literature, always failing, yet still desperately renewed. Homer defies modern reproduction. His primeval simplicity is a dew of the dawn which can never be re-distilled. His primeval savagery is almost equally unpresentable. What civilized poet can don the barbarian sufficiently to revel, or seem to revel, in the ghastly details of carnage, in hideous wounds described with surgical gusto, in the butchery of captives in cold blood, or even in those particulars of the shambles and the spit which to the troubadour of barbarism seem as delightful as the images of the harvest and the vintage? Poetry can be translated into poetry only by taking up the ideas of the original into the mind of the translator, which is very difficult when the translator and the original are separated by a gulf of thought and feeling, and when the gulf is very wide, becomes impossible. There is nothing for it in the case of Homer but a prose translation. Even in prose to find perfect equivalents for some of the Homeric phrases is not easy. Whatever the chronological date of the Homeric poems may be, their political and psychological date may be pretty well fixed. Politically they belong, as the episode of Thersites shows, to the rise of democracy and to its first collision with aristocracy, which Homer regards with the feelings of a bard who sang in aristocratic halls. Psychologically they belong to the time when, in ideas and language, the moral was just disengaging itself from the physical. In the wail of Andromache, for instance, *adinon epos*, which Pope improves into "sadly dear," and Cowper, with better taste at all events, renders "precious," is really semiphysical, and scarcely capable of exact translation. It belongs to an unreproducible past, like the fierce joy which, in the same wail, bursts from the savage woman in the midst of her desolation at the thought of the numbers whom her husband's hands had slain. Cowper had studied the Homeric poems thoroughly in his youth; he knew them so well that he was able to translate them, not very incorrectly with only the help of a Clavis; he understood their peculiar qualities as well as it was possible for a reader without the historic sense to do; he had compared Pope's translation carefully with the original, and had decisively noted the defects which make it not a version of Homer, but a periwigged epic of the Augustan age. In his own translation he avoids Pope's faults, and he preserves at least the dignity of the original, while his command of language could never fail him, nor could he ever lack the guidance of good taste. But we well know where he will be at his best. We turn at once to such passages as the description of Calypso's Isle.

> "Alighting on Pieria, down he (Hermes) stooped
> To Ocean, and the billows lightly skimmed
> In form a sea-mew, such as in the bays
> Tremendous of the barren deep her food
> Seeking, dips oft in brine her ample wing.
> In such disguise o'er many a wave he rode,
> But reaching, now, that isle remote, forsook
> The azure deep, and at the spacious grove
> Where dwelt the amber-tressed nymph arrived
> Found her within. A fire on all the hearth
> Blazed sprightly, and, afar diffused, the scent
> Of smooth-split cedar and of cypress-wood
> Odorous, burning cheered the happy isle.
> She, busied at the loom and plying fast
> Her golden shuttle, with melodious voice
> Sat chanting there; a grove on either side,
> Alder and poplar, and the redolent branch
> Wide-spread of cypress, skirted dark the cave
> Where many a bird of broadest pinion built
> Secure her nest, the owl, the kite, and daw,
> Long-tongued frequenters of the sandy shores.
> A garden vine luxuriant on all sides
> Mantled the spacious cavern, cluster-hung
> Profuse; four fountains of serenest lymph,
> Their sinuous course pursuing side by side,
> Strayed all around, and everywhere appeared
> Meadows of softest verdure purpled o'er
> With violets; it was a scene to fill
> A God from heaven with wonder and delight."

There are faults in this, and even blunders, notably in the natural history; and "serenest lymph" is a sad departure from Homeric simplicity. Still, on the whole, the passage in the translation charms, and its charm is tolerably identical with that of the original. In more martial and stirring passages the failure is more signal, and here especially we feel that if Pope's rhyming couplets are sorry equivalents for the Homeric hexameter, blank verse is superior to them only in a negative way. The real equivalent, if any, is the romance metre of Scott, parts of whose poems, notably the last canto of *Marmion* and some passages in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, are about the most Homeric things in our language. Cowper brought such poetic gifts to his work that his failure might have deterred others from making the same hopeless attempt. But a failure his work is; the translation is no more a counterpart of the original than the Ouse creeping through its meadows is the counterpart of the Ægean rolling before a fresh wind and under a bright sun. Pope delights school-boys; Cowper delights nobody, though, on the rare occasions when he is taken from the shelf, he commends himself, in a certain measure, to the taste and judgment of cultivated men.

In his translations of Horace, both those from the Satires and those from the Odes, Cowper succeeds far better. Horace requires in his translator little of the fire which Cowper lacked. In the Odes he requires grace, in the Satires urbanity and playfulness, all of which Cowper had in abundance. Moreover, Horace is separated from us by no intellectual gulf. He belongs to what Dr. Arnold called the modern period of ancient history. Nor is Cowper's translation of part of the eighth book of Virgil's *Æneid* bad, in spite of the heaviness of the blank verse. Virgil, like Horace, is within his intellectual range.

As though a translation of the whole of the Homeric poems had not been enough to bury his finer faculty, and prevent him from giving us any more of the minor poems, the publishers seduced him into undertaking an edition of Milton, which was to eclipse all its predecessors in splendor. Perhaps he may have been partly entrapped by a chivalrous desire to rescue his idol from the disparagement cast on it by the tasteless and illiberal Johnson. The project, after weighing on his mind and spirits for some time, was abandoned, leaving as its traces only translations of Milton's Latin Poems, and a few notes on *Paradise Lost*, in which there is too much of religion, too little of art.

Lady Hesketh had her eye on the Laureateship, and probably with that view persuaded her cousin to write loyal verses on the recovery of George III. He wrote the verses, but to the hint of the Laureateship he said, "Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreaths beside may hereafter adorn them. It would be a leaden extinguisher clapt on my genius, and I should never more produce a line worth reading." Besides, was he not already the mortuary poet of All Saints', Northampton?

CHAPTER VII.

THE LETTERS.

SOUTHEY, no mean judge in such a matter, calls Cowper the best of English letter-writers. If the first place is shared with him by any one it is by Byron, rather than by Gray, whose letters are pieces of fine writing, addressed to literary men, or Horace Walpole, whose letters are memoirs, the English counterpart of St. Simon. The letters both of Gray and Walpole are manifestly written for publication. Those of Cowper have the true epistolary charm. They are conversation, perfectly artless, and at the same time autobiography, perfectly genuine; whereas all formal autobiography is cooked. They are the vehicles of the writer's thoughts and feelings, and the mirror of his life. We have the strongest proofs that they were not written for publication. In many of them there are outpourings of wretchedness which could not possibly have been intended for any heart but that to which they were addressed, while others contain medical details which no one would have thought of presenting to the public eye. Some, we know, were answers to letters received but a moment before, and Southey says that the manuscripts are very free from erasures. Though Cowper kept a note-book for subjects, which no doubt were scarce with him, it is manifest that he did not premeditate. Grace of form he never lacks, but this was a part of his nature, improved by his classical training. The character and the thoughts presented are those of a recluse who was sometimes a hypochondriac; the life is life at Olney. But simple self-revelation is always interesting, and a garrulous playfulness with great happiness of expression can lend a certain charm even to things most trivial and commonplace. There is also a certain pleasure in being carried back to the quiet days before railways and telegraphs, when people passed their whole lives on the same spot, and life moved always in the same tranquil round. In truth, it is to such days that letter-writing, as a species of literature, belongs; telegrams and postal cards have almost killed it now.

The large collection of Cowper's letters is probably seldom taken from the shelf; and the "Elegant Extracts" select those letters which are most sententious, and therefore least characteristic. Two or three specimens of the other style may not be unwelcome or needless as elements of a biographical sketch; though specimens hardly do justice to a series of which the charm, such as it is, is evenly diffused, not gathered into centres of brilliancy like Madame de Sévigné's letter on the Orleans Marriage. Here is a letter written in the highest spirits to Lady Hesketh.

"OLNEY, Feb. 9, 1786.

"MY DEAREST COUSIN: I have been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and also longs to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that, I doubt not, we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects—the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks, everything that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them all; though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us, When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty.

"And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. *Imprimis*, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present; but he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made; but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the further end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlor, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

"My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be anything better than a cask to eternity. So, if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

"Adieu! my dearest, dearest cousin. W. C."

Here, by way of contrast, is a letter written in the lowest spirits possible to Mr. Newton. It displays literary grace inalienable even in the depths of hypochondria. It also shows plainly the connection of hypochondria with the weather. January was a month to the return of which the sufferer always looked forward with dread as a mysterious season of evil. It was a season, especially at Olney, of thick fog combined with bitter frosts. To Cowper this state of the atmosphere appeared the emblem of his mental state; we see in it the cause. At the close the letter slides from spiritual despair to the worsted-merchant, showing that, as we remarked before, the language of despondency had become habitual, and does not always flow from a soul really in the depths of woe.

To the Rev. John Newton.

"Jan. 13, 1784.

"My dear Friend: I too have taken leave of the old year, and parted with it just when you did, but with very different sentiments and feelings upon the occasion. I looked back upon all the passages and occurrences of it, as a traveller looks back upon a wilderness through which he has passed with weariness and sorrow of heart, reaping no other fruit of his labor than the poor consolation that, dreary as the desert was, he has left it all behind him. The traveller would find even this comfort considerably lessened if, as soon as he had passed one wilderness, another of equal length, and equally desolate, should expect him. In this particular, his experience and mine would exactly tally. I should rejoice, indeed, that the old year is over and gone, if I had not every reason to prophesy a new one similar to it.

"The new year is already old in my account. I am not, indeed, sufficiently second-sighted to be able to boast by anticipation an acquaintance with the events of it yet unborn, but rest convinced that, be they what they may, not one of them comes a messenger of good to me. If even death itself should be of the number, he is no friend of mine. It is an alleviation of the woes even of an unenlightened man, that he can wish for death, and indulge a hope, at least, that in death he shall find deliverance. But, loaded as my life is with despair, I have no such comfort as would result from a supposed probability of better things to come, were it once ended. For, more unhappy than the traveller with whom I set out, pass through what difficulties I may, through whatever dangers and afflictions, I am not a whit nearer the home, unless a dungeon may be called so. This is no very agreeable theme; but in so great a dearth of subjects to write upon, and especially impressed as I am at this moment with a sense of my own condition, I could choose no other. The weather is an exact emblem of my mind in its present state. A thick fog envelops everything, and at the same time it freezes intensely. You will tell me that this cold gloom will be succeeded by a cheerful spring, and endeavor to encourage me to hope for a spiritual change resembling it—but it will be lost labor. Nature revives again; but a soul once slain lives no more. The hedge that has been apparently dead, is not so; it will burst into leaf and blossom at the appointed time; but no such time is appointed for the stake that stands in it. It is as dead as it seems, and will prove itself no dissembler. The latter end of next month will complete a period of eleven years in which I have spoken no other language. It is a long time for a man, whose eyes were once opened, to spend in darkness; long enough to make despair an inveterate habit; and such it is in me. My friends, I know, expect that I shall see yet again. They think it necessary to the existence of divine truth, that he who once had possession of it should never finally lose it. I admit the solidity of this reasoning in every case but my own. And why not in my own? For causes which to them it appears madness to allege, but which rest upon my mind with a weight of immovable conviction. If I am recoverable, why am I thus?—why crippled and made useless in the Church, just at that time of life when, my judgment and experience being matured, I might be most useful?—why cashiered and turned out of service, till, according to the course of nature, there is not life enough left in me to make amends for the years I have lost—till there is no reasonable hope left that the fruit can ever pay the expense of the fallow? I forestall the answer: God's ways are mysterious, and He giveth no account of His matters—an answer that would serve my purpose as well as theirs to use it. There is a mystery in my destruction, and in time it shall be explained.

"I am glad you have found so much hidden treasure; and Mrs. Unwin desires me to tell you that you did her no more than justice in believing that she would rejoice in it. It is not easy to surmise the reason why the reverend doctor, your predecessor, concealed it. Being a subject of a free government, and I suppose full of the divinity most in fashion, he could not fear lest his riches should expose him to persecution. Nor can I suppose that he held it any disgrace for a dignitary of the Church to be wealthy, at a time when Churchmen in general spare no pains to become so. But the wisdom of some men has a droll sort of knavishness in it, much like that of a magpie, who hides what he finds with a deal of contrivance, merely for the pleasure of doing it.

"Mrs. Unwin is tolerably well. She wishes me to add that she shall be obliged to Mrs. Newton, if, when an opportunity offers, she will give the worsted-merchant a jog. We congratulate you that Eliza does not grow worse, which I know you expected would be the case in the course of the winter. Present our love to her. Remember us to Sally Johnson, and assure yourself that we remain as warmly as ever, Yours, W. C.
"M. U."

In the next specimen we shall see the faculty of imparting interest to the most trivial incident by the way of telling it. The incident in this case is one which also forms the subject of the little poem called *The Colubriad.*

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

"AUG. 3, 1782.

"MY DEAR FRIEND: Entertaining some hope that Mr. Newton's next letter would furnish me with the means of satisfying your inquiry on the subject of Dr. Johnson's opinion, I have till now delayed my answer to your last; but the information is not yet come, Mr. Newton having intermitted a week more than usual since his last writing. When I receive it, favorable or not, it shall be communicated to you; but I am not very sanguine in my expectations from that quarter. Very learned and very critical heads are hard to please. He may, perhaps, treat me with levity for the sake of my subject and design, but the composition, I think, will hardly escape his censure. Though all doctors may not be of the same mind, there is one doctor at least, whom I have lately discovered, my professed admirer. He too, like Johnson, was with difficulty persuaded to read, having an aversion to all poetry except the *Night Thoughts*; which, on a certain occasion, when being confined on board a ship, he had no other employment, he got by heart. He was, however, prevailed upon, and read me several times over; so that if my volume had sailed with him, instead of Dr. Young's, I might, perhaps, have occupied that shelf in his memory which he then allotted to the Doctor: his name is Renny, and he lives at Newport Pagnel.

"It is a sort of paradox, but it is true: we are never more in danger than when we think ourselves most secure, nor in reality more secure than when we seem to be most in danger. Both sides of this apparent contradiction were lately verified in my experience. Passing from the greenhouse to the barn, I saw three kittens (for we have so many in our retinue) looking with fixed attention at something which lay on the threshold of a door, coiled up. I took but little notice of them at first; but a loud hiss engaged me to attend more closely, when behold—a viper! the largest I remember to have seen, rearing itself, darting its forked tongue, and ejaculating the aforementioned hiss at the nose of a kitten, almost in contact with his lips. I ran into the hall for a hoe with a long handle, with which I intended to assail him, and returning in a few seconds missed him: he was gone, and I feared had escaped me. Still, however, the kitten sat watching immovably upon the same spot. I concluded, therefore, that, sliding between the door and the threshold, he had found his way out of the garden into the yard. I went round immediately, and there found him in close conversation with the old cat, whose curiosity being excited by so novel an appearance, inclined her to pat his head repeatedly with her forefoot; with her claws, however, sheathed, and not in anger, but in the way of philosophical inquiry and examination. To prevent her falling a victim to so laudable an exercise of her talents, I interposed in a moment with the hoe, and performed an act of decapitation, which, though not immediately mortal, proved so in the end. Had he slid into the passages, where it is dark, or had he, when in the yard, met with no interruption from the cat, and secreted himself in any of the outhouses, it is hardly possible but that some of the family must have been bitten; he might have been trodden upon without being perceived, and have slipped away before the sufferer could have well distinguished what foe had wounded him. Three years ago we discovered one in the same place, which the barber slew with a trowel.

"Our proposed removal to Mr. Small's was, as you suppose, a jest, or rather a joco-serious matter. We never looked upon it as entirely feasible, yet we saw in it something so like practicability, that we did not esteem it altogether unworthy of our attention. It was one of those projects which people of lively imaginations play with, and admire for a few days, and then break in pieces. Lady Austen returned on Thursday from London, where she spent the last fortnight, and whither she was called by an unexpected opportunity to dispose of the remainder of her lease. She has now, therefore, no longer any connection with the great city; she has none on earth whom she calls friends but us, and no house but at Olney. Her abode is to be at the Vicarage, where she has hired as much room as she wants, which she will embellish with her own furniture, and which she will occupy, as soon as the minister's wife has produced another child, which is expected to make its entry in October.

"Mr. Bull, a dissenting minister of Newport, a learned, ingenious, good-natured, pious friend of ours, who sometimes visits us, and whom we visited last week, has put into my hands three volumes of French poetry, composed by Madame Guyon—a quietist, say you, and a fanatic; I will have nothing to do with her. It is very well, you are welcome to have nothing to do with her, but in the mean time her verse is the only French verse I ever read that I found agreeable; there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud with so much reason in the compositions of Prior. I have translated several of them, and shall proceed in my translations till I have filled a Liliputian paper-book I happen to have by me, which, when filled, I shall present to Mr. Bull. He is her passionate admirer, rode twenty miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger, which stranger politely insisted on his acceptance of it, and it now hangs over his parlor chimney. It is a striking portrait, too characteristic not to be a strong resemblance, and were it encompassed with a glory, instead of being dressed in a nun's hood, might pass for the face of an angel.

"Our meadows are covered with a winter-flood in August; the rushes with which our bottomless chairs were to have been bottomed, and much hay, which was not carried, are gone down the river on a voyage to Ely, and it is even uncertain whether they will ever return. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

"I am glad you have found a curate; may he answer! Am happy in Mrs. Bouverie's continued approbation; it is worth while to write for such a reader. Yours, W. C."

The power of imparting interest to commonplace incidents is so great that we read with a sort of excitement a minute account of the conversion of an old card-table into a writing and dining table, with the causes and consequences of that momentous event; curiosity having been first cunningly aroused by the suggestion that the clerical friend to whom the letter is addressed might, if the mystery were not explained, be haunted by it when he was getting into his pulpit, at which time, as he had told Cowper, perplexing questions were apt to come into his mind.

A man who lived by himself could have little but himself to write about. Yet in these letters there is hardly a touch of offensive egotism. Nor is there any querulousness, except that of religious despondency, From those weaknesses Cowper was free. Of his proneness to self-revelation we have had a specimen already.

The minor antiquities of the generations immediately preceding ours are becoming rare, as compared with those of remote ages, because nobody thinks it worth while to preserve them. It is almost as easy to get a personal memento of Priam or Nimrod as it is to get a harpsichord, a spinning-wheel, a tinder-box, or a scratch-back. An Egyptian wig is attainable, a wig of the Georgian era is hardly so, much less a tie of the Regency. So it is with the scenes of common life a century or two ago. They are being lost, because they were familiar. Here are two of them, however, which have limned themselves with the distinctness of the camera-obscura on the page of a chronicler of trifles.

To THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

"Nov. 17, 1783.

"MY DEAR FRIEND; The country around is much alarmed with apprehensions of fire. Two have happened since that of Olney. One at Hitchin, where the damage is said to amount to eleven thousand pounds; and another, at a place not far from Hitchin, of which I have not yet learnt the name. Letters have been dropped at Bedford, threatening to burn the town; and the inhabitants have been so intimidated as to have placed a guard in many parts of it, several nights past. Since our conflagration here, we have sent two women and a boy to the justice for depredation; S. R. for stealing a piece of beef, which, in her excuse, she said she intended to take care of. This lady, whom you well remember, escaped for want of evidence; not that evidence was wanting, but our men of Gotham judged it unnecessary to send it. With her went the woman I mentioned before, who, it seems, has made some sort of profession, but upon this occasion allowed herself a latitude of conduct rather inconsistent with it, having filled her apron with wearing-apparel, which she likewise intended to take care of. She would have gone to the county gaol, had William Raban, the baker's son, who prosecuted, insisted upon it; but he, good-naturedly, though I think weakly, interposed in her favor, and begged her off. The young gentleman who accompanied these fair ones is the junior son of Molly Boswell. He had stolen some iron-work, the property of Griggs the butcher. Being convicted, he was ordered to be whipped, which operation he underwent at the cart's tail, from the stone-house to the high arch, and back again. He seemed to show great fortitude, but it was all an imposition upon the public. The beadle, who performed it, had filled his left hand with yellow ochre, through which, after every stroke, he drew the lash of his whip, leaving the appearance of a wound upon the skin, but in reality not hurting him at all. This being perceived by Mr. Constable H., who followed the beadle, he applied his cane, without any such management or precaution, to the shoulders of the too merciful executioner. The scene immediately became more interesting. The beadle could by no means be prevailed upon to strike hard, which provoked the constable to strike harder; and this double flogging continued, till a lass of Silver-End, pitying the pitiful beadle thus suffering under the hands of the pitiless constable, joined the procession, and placing herself immediately behind the latter, seized him by his capillary club, and pulling him backwards by the same, slapped his face with a most Amazon fury. This concatenation of events has taken up more of my paper than I intended it should, but I could not forbear to inform you how the beadle thrashed the thief, the constable the beadle, and the lady the constable, and how the thief was the only person concerned who suffered nothing. Mr. Teedon has been here, and is gone again. He came to thank me for some left-off clothes. In answer to our inquiries after his health, he replied that he had a slow fever, which made him take all possible care not to inflame his blood. I admitted his prudence, but in his particular instance could not very clearly discern the need of it. Pump water will not heat him much; and, to speak a little in his own style, more inebriating fluids are to him, I fancy, not very attainable. He brought us news, the truth of which, however, I do not vouch for, that the town of Bedford was actually on fire yesterday, and the flames not extinguished when the bearer of the tidings left it.

"Swift observes, when he is giving his reasons why the preacher is elevated always above his hearers, that, let the crowd be as great as it will below, there is always room enough overhead. If the French philosophers can carry their art of flying to the perfection they desire, the observation may be reversed; the crowd will be overhead, and they will have most room who stay below. I can assure you, however, upon my own experience, that this way of travelling is very delightful. I dreamt a night or two since that I drove myself through the upper regions in a balloon and pair, with the greatest ease and security. Having finished the tour I intended, I made a short turn, and, with one flourish of my whip, descended; my horses prancing and curvetting with an infinite share of spirit, but without the least danger, either to me or my vehicle. The time, we may suppose, is at hand, and seems to be prognosticated by my dream, when these airy excursions will be universal, when judges will fly the circuit, and bishops their visitations; and when the tour of Europe will be performed with much greater speed, and with equal advantage, by all who travel merely for the sake of having it to say that they have made it.

"I beg you will accept for yourself and yours our unfeigned love, and remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon, when you see him.

"Yours, my dear friend, WM. COWPER."

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

"MARCH 29, 1784.

"MY DEAR FRIEND: It being his Majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the Parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

"As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard Side, where in general, we live as undisturbed by the political element as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water-mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlor, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys bellowed, and the maid announced Mr. Grenville. Puss was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

"Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at the window than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlor were filled. Mr. Grenville, advancing toward me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he, and as many more as could find chairs, were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because

Mr. Ashburner, the draper, addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed, likewise, the maid in the kitchen, and seemed, upon the whole, a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he suspended from his buttonhole. The boys halloo'd; the dogs barked; puss scampered; the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued; and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the country, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. Ashburner, perhaps, was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honor of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not, I suppose, have been bound to produce them.

"Mr. Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurt him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended; but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and tears away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

"Many thanks for the worsted, which is excellent. We are as well as a spring hardly less severe than the severest winter will give us leave to be. With our united love, we conclude ourselves yours and Mrs. Newton's affectionate and faithful, W. C.

"M. U."

In 1789 the French Revolution, advancing with thunder-tread, makes even the hermit of Weston look up for a moment from his translation of Homer, though he little dreamed that he, with his gentle philanthropy and sentimentalism, had anything to do with the great overturn of the social and political systems of the past. From time to time some crash of especial magnitude awakens a faint echo in the letters.

TO LADY HESKETH.

"JULY 7, 1790.

"Instead of beginning with the saffron-vested mourning to which Homer invites me, on a morning that has no saffron vest to boast, I shall begin with you. It is irksome to us both to wait so long as we must for you, but we are willing to hope that by a longer stay you will make us amends for all this tedious procrastination.

"Mrs. Unwin has made known her whole case to Mr. Gregson, whose opinion of it has been very consolatory to me; he says, indeed, it is a case perfectly out of the reach of all physical aid, but at the same time not at all dangerous. Constant pain is a sad grievance, whatever part is affected, and she is hardly ever free from an aching head, as well as an uneasy side; but patience is an anodyne of God's own preparation, and of that He gives her largely.

"The French who, like all lively folks, are extreme in everything, are such in their zeal for freedom; and if it were possible to make so noble a cause ridiculous, their manner of promoting it could not fail to do so. Princes and peers reduced to plain gentlemanship, and gentles reduced to a level with their own lackeys, are excesses of which they will repent hereafter. Differences of rank and subordination are, I believe, of God's appointment, and consequently essential to the well-being of society; but what we mean by fanaticism in religion is exactly that which animates their politics; and, unless time should sober them, they will, after all, be an unhappy people. Perhaps it deserves not much to be wondered at, that at their first escape from tyrannic shackles they should act extravagantly, and treat their kings as they have sometimes treated their idol. To these, however, they are reconciled in due time again, but their respect for monarchy is at an end. They want nothing now but a little English sobriety, and that they want extremely. I heartily wish them some wit in their anger, for it were great pity that so many millions should be miserable for want of it."

This, it will be admitted, is very moderate and unapocalyptic. Presently Monarchical Europe takes arms against the Revolution. But there are two political observers at least, who see that Monarchical Europe is making a mistake—Kaunitz and Cowper. "The French," observes Cowper to Lady Hesketh in December, 1792, "are a vain and childish people, and conduct themselves on this grand occasion with a levity and extravagance nearly akin to madness, but it would have been better for Austria and Prussia to let them alone. All nations have a right to choose their own form of government, and the sovereignty of the people is a doctrine that evinces itself; for, whenever the people choose to be masters, they always are so, and none can hinder them. God grant that we may have no Revolution here, but unless we have reform, we certainly shall. Depend upon it, my dear, the hour has come when power founded on patronage and corrupt majorities must govern this land no longer. Concessions, too, must be made to Dissenters of every denomination. They have a right to them—a right to all the privileges of Englishmen, and sooner or later, by fair means or by foul, they will have them." Even in 1793, though he expresses, as he well might, a cordial abhorrence of the doings of the French, he calls them not fiends, but "madcaps." He expresses the strongest indignation against the Tory mob which sacked Priestley's house at Birmingham, as he does, in justice be it said, against all manifestations of fanaticism. We cannot help sometimes wishing, as we read these passages in the letters, that their calmness and reasonableness could have been communicated to another "Old Whig," who was setting the world on fire with his anti-revolutionary rhetoric.

It is true, as has already been said, that Cowper was "extramundane;" and that his political reasonableness was in part the result of the fancy that he and his fellow-saints had nothing to do with the world but to keep themselves clear of it, and let it go its own way to destruction. But it must also be admitted that while the wealth of Establishments of which Burke was the ardent defender, is necessarily reactionary in the highest degree, the tendency of religion itself, where it is genuine and sincere, must be to repress any selfish feeling about class or position, and to make men, in temporal matters, more willing to sacrifice the present to the future, especially where the hope is held out of moral as well as of material improvement. Thus it has come to pass that men who professed and imagined themselves to have no interest in this world have practically been its great reformers and improvers in the political and material as well as in the moral sphere.

The last specimen shall be one in the more sententious style, and one which proves that Cowper was capable of writing in a judicious manner on a difficult and delicate question—even a question so difficult and so delicate as that of the propriety of painting the face.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

"MAY 3, 1784.

"MY DEAR FRIEND: The subject of face painting may be considered, I think, in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and, secondly, whether it be, on the whole, convenient or not, may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any further than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

"As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have, in fact, neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgment of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their color to be natural for a moment, any more than he would if it were blue or green; and this unambiguous judgment of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally either brown or yellow, with very few exceptions; and secondly, to the inartificial manner in which they paint; for they do not, as I am most satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily, and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where, therefore, there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England, I am afraid, our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties, who litigate with great warmth the question whether painted or not? This was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious till she attained an age that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very beautiful, and much more beautiful than Nature has made them, is a symptom not very favorable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our countrywomen. That they are guilty of a design to deceive, is certain. Otherwise why so much art? and if to deceive, wherefore and with what purpose? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind, or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here, therefore, my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character; and in no instance should I think the worse of one because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so; and it is well if that be all the censure she deserves.

"This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic; and here I feel that I should be fearfully puzzled were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest, to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own, for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials, to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case, however, can I imagine the practice in this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one it certainly is not expedient, because, in general, English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here; and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one, but they cannot, at least they hardly can, give themselves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel which should make them tremble.

"I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England, she that uses one commonly uses both. Now, all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they may be called, are mercurial; consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous, in time, to the constitution. The Miss B—— above mentioned was a miserable witness of this truth, it being certain that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady Coventry was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician, perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality, of a length that would astonish us.

"For these reasons I utterly condemn the practice, as it obtains in England; and for a reason superior to all these, I must disapprove it. I cannot, indeed, discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words. But that anxious solicitude about the person, which such an artifice evidently betrays, is, I am sure, contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth, and not on things above.

"But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art. For, in the use of French women, I think it is as innocent as in the use of a wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue, perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

"*Vive valeque.*

"Yours ever, W. C."

These letters have been chosen as illustrations of Cowper's epistolary style, and for that purpose they have been given entire. But they are also the best pictures of his character; and his character is everything The events of his life worthy of record might all be comprised in a dozen pages.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSE OF LIFE.

COWPER says there could not have been a happier trio on earth than Lady Hesketh, Mrs. Unwin, and himself. Nevertheless, after his removal to Weston, he again went mad, and once more attempted self-destruction. His malady was constitutional, and it settled down upon him as his years increased, and his strength failed. He was now sixty. The Olney physicians, instead of husbanding his vital power, had wasted it away *secundum artem* by purging, bleeding, and emetics. He had overworked himself on his fatal translation of Homer, under the burden of which he moved, as he says himself, like an ass overladen with sand-bags. He had been getting up to work at six, and not breakfasting till eleven. And now the life from which his had for so many years been fed, itself began to fail. Mrs. Unwin was stricken with paralysis; the stroke was slight, but of its nature there was no doubt. Her days of bodily life were numbered; of mental life there remained to her a still shorter span. Her excellent son, William Unwin, had died of a fever soon after the removal of the pair to Weston. He had been engaged in the work of his profession as a clergyman, and we do not hear of his being often at Olney. But he was in constant correspondence with Cowper, in whose heart as well as in that of Mrs. Unwin, his death must have left a great void, and his support was withdrawn just at the moment when it was about to become most necessary.

Happily, just at this juncture a new and a good friend appeared. Hayley was a mediocre poet, who had for a time obtained distinction above his merits. Afterwards his star had declined, but having an excellent heart, he had not been in the least soured by the downfall of his reputation. He was addicted to a pompous rotundity of style; perhaps he was rather absurd; but he was thoroughly good-natured, very anxious to make himself useful, and devoted to Cowper, to whom, as a poet, he looked up with an admiration unalloyed by any other feeling. Both of them, as it happened, were engaged on Milton, and an attempt had been made to set them by the ears; but Hayley took advantage of it to introduce himself to Cowper with an effusion of the warmest esteem. He was at Weston when Mrs. Unwin was attacked with paralysis, and displayed his resource by trying to cure her with an electric-machine. At Eartham, on the coast of Sussex, he had, by an expenditure beyond his means, made for himself a little paradise, where it was his delight to gather a distinguished circle. To this place he gave the pair a pressing invitation, which was accepted in the vain hope that a change might do Mrs. Unwin good.

From Weston to Eartham was a three days' journey, an enterprise not undertaken without much trepidation and earnest prayer. It was safely accomplished, however, the enthusiastic Mr. Rose walking to meet his poet and philosopher on the way. Hayley had tried to get Thurlow to meet Cowper. A sojourn in a country house with the tremendous Thurlow, the only talker for whom Johnson condescended to prepare himself, would have been rather an overpowering pleasure; and perhaps, after all, it was as well that Hayley could only get Cowper's disciple, Hurdis, afterwards professor of poetry at Oxford, and Charlotte Smith.

At Eartham, Cowper's portrait was painted by Romney.

> " Romney, expert infallibly to trace
> On chart or canvas not the form alone
> And semblance, but, however faintly shown
> The mind's impression too on every face,
> With strokes that time ought never to erase,
> Thou hast so pencilled mine that though I own
> The subject worthless, I have never known
> The artist shining with superior grace;
> But this I mark, that symptoms none of woe
> In thy incomparable work appear
> Well: I am satisfied it should be so,
> Since on maturer thought the cause is clear;
> For in my looks what sorrow could'st thou see
> When I was Hayley's guest and sat to thee."

Southey observes that it was likely enough there would be no melancholy in the portrait, but that Hayley and Romney fell into a singular error in mistaking for "the light of genius" what Leigh Hunt calls "a fire fiercer than that either of intellect or fancy, gleaming from the raised and protruded eye."

Hayley evidently did his utmost to make his guest happy. They spent the hours in literary chat, and compared notes about Milton. The first days were days of enjoyment. But soon the recluse began to long for his nook at Weston. Even the extensiveness of the view at Eartham made his mind ache, and increased his melancholy. To Weston the pair returned; the paralytic, of course, none the better for her journey. Her mind as well as her body was now rapidly giving way. We quote as biography that which is too well known to be quoted as poetry.

TO MARY.

The twentieth year is well-nigh past
Since first our sky was overcast:—
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow:—
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou play'dst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art,
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language utter'd in a dream:
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet gently press'd, press gently mine,
My Mary.

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,
That now at every step thou movest,
Upheld by two; yet still thou lovest,
My Mary!

And still to love, though press'd with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know,
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

Even love, at least the power of manifesting love, began to betray its mortality. She who had been so devoted, became, as her mind failed, exacting, and instead of supporting her partner, drew him down. He sank again into the depth of hypochondria. As usual, his malady took the form of religious horrors, and he fancied that he was ordained to undergo severe penance for his sins. Six days he sat motionless and silent, almost refusing to take food. His physician suggested, as the only chance of arousing him, that Mrs. Unwin should be induced, if possible, to invite him to go out with her; with difficulty she was made to understand what they wanted her to do; at last she said that it was a fine morning, and she should like a walk. Her partner at once rose and placed her arm in his. Almost unconsciously, she had rescued him from the evil spirit for the last time. The pair were in doleful plight. When their minds failed they had fallen in a miserable manner under the influence of a man named Teedon, a schoolmaster crazed with self-conceit, at whom Cowper in his saner mood had laughed, but whom he now treated as a spiritual oracle, and a sort of medium of communication with the spirit-world, writing down the nonsense which the charlatan talked. Mrs. Unwin, being no longer in a condition to control the expenditure, the housekeeping, of course, went wrong; and at the same time her partner lost the protection of the love-inspired tact by which she had always contrived to shield his weakness and to secure for him, in spite of his eccentricities, respectful treatment from his neighbors. Lady Hesketh's health had failed, and she had been obliged to go to Bath. Hayley now proved himself no mere lion-hunter, but a true friend. In conjunction with Cowper's relatives, he managed the removal of the pair from Weston to Mundsley, on the coast of Norfolk, where Cowper seemed to be soothed by the sound of the sea; then to Dunham Lodge, near Swaffham; and finally (in 1796) to East Dereham, where, two months after their arrival, Mrs. Unwin died. Her partner was barely conscious of his loss. On the morning of her death he asked the servant "whether there was life above stairs?" On being taken to see the corpse, he gazed at it for a moment, uttered one passionate cry of grief, and never spoke of Mrs. Unwin more. He had the misfortune to survive her three years and a half, during which relatives and friends were kind, and Miss Perowne partly filled the place of Mrs. Unwin. Now and then there was a gleam of reason and faint revival of literary faculty; but composition was confined to Latin verse or translation, with one memorable and almost awful exception. The last original poem written by Cowper was *The Castaway*, founded on an incident in Anson's Voyage.

> "Obscurest night involved the sky,
>   The Atlantic billows roared,
> When such a destined wretch as I,
>   Wash'd headlong from on board,
> Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
> His floating home forever left.
>
> "No braver chief could Albion boast
>   Than he with whom he went,
> Nor ever ship left Albion's coast
>   With warmer wishes sent.
> He loved them both, but both in vain;
> Nor him beheld, nor her again.

"Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But waged with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

"He shouted; nor his friends had fail'd
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'd
That pitiless perforce
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

"Some succor yet they could afford;
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delay'd not to bestow:
But he, they knew, nor ship nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

"Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight in such a sea
Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

"He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent power,
His destiny repelled:
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried—'Adieu!'

"At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast,
Could catch the sound no more:
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

"No poet wept him; but the page
Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear:
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

"I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

"No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he."

The despair which finds vent in verse is hardly despair. Poetry can never be the direct expression of emotion ; it must be the product of reflection combined with an exercise of the faculty of composition which in itself is pleasant. Still, *The Castaway* ought to be an antidote to religious depression, since it is the work of a man of whom it would be absurdity to think as really estranged from the spirit of good, who had himself done good to the utmost of his powers.

Cowper died very peacefully on the morning of April 25th, 1800, and was buried in Dereham Church, where there is a monument to him with an inscription by Hayley, which, if it is not good poetry, is a tribute of sincere affection.

Any one whose lot it is to write upon the life and works of Cowper must feel that there is an immense difference between the interest which attaches to him, and that which attaches to any one among the far greater poets of the succeeding age. Still, there is something about him so attractive, his voice has such a silver tone, he retains, even in his ashes, such a faculty of winning friends, that his biographer and critic may be easily beguiled into giving him too high a place. He belongs to a particular religious movement, with the vitality of which the interest of a great part of his works has departed or is departing. Still more emphatically and in a still more important sense does he belong to Christianity. In no natural struggle for existence would he have been the survivor ; by no natural process of selection would he ever have been picked out as a vessel of honor. If the shield which for eighteen centuries Christ, by His teaching and His death, has spread over the weak things of this world, should fail, and might should again become the title to existence and the measure of worth, Cowper will be cast aside as a specimen of despicable infirmity, and all who have said anything in his praise will be treated with the same scorn.

SOUTHEY.

BY

EDWARD DOWDEN.

SOUTHEY.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

No one of his generation lived so completely in and for literature as did Southey. "He is," said Byron, "the only existing entire man of letters." With him literature served the needs both of the material life and of the life of the intellect and imagination; it was his means of earning daily bread, and also the means of satisfying his highest ambitions and desires. This, which was true of Southey at five-and-twenty years of age, was equally true at forty, fifty, sixty. During all that time he was actively at work accumulating, arranging, and distributing knowledge; no one among his contemporaries gathered so large a store from the records of the past; no one toiled with such steadfast devotion to enrich his age; no one occupied so honorable a place in so many provinces of literature. There is not, perhaps, any single work of Southey's the loss of which would be felt by us as a capital misfortune. But the more we consider his total work, its mass, its variety, its high excellence, the more we come to regard it as a memorable, an extraordinary achievement.

Southey himself, however, stands above his works. In subject they are disconnected, and some of them appear like huge fragments. It is the presence of one mind, one character in all, easily recognizable by him who knows Southey, which gives them a vital unity. We could lose the *History of Brazil*, or the *Peninsular War*, or the *Life of Wesley*, and feel that if our possessions were diminished, we ourselves in our inmost being had undergone no loss which might not easily be endured. But he who has once come to know Southey's voice as the voice of a friend, so clear, so brave, so honest, so full of boyish glee, so full of manly tenderness, feels that if he heard that voice no more a portion of his life were gone. To make acquaintance with the man is better than to study the subjects of his books. In such a memoir as the present, to glance over the contents of a hundred volumes, dealing with matters widely remote, would be to wander upon a vast circumference when we ought to strike for the centre. If the reader come to know Southey as he read and wrote in his library, as he rejoiced and sorrowed among his children, as he held hands with good old friends, as he walked by the lake-side, or lingered to muse near some mountain stream, as he hoped and feared for England, as he thought of life and death and a future beyond the grave, the end of this small book will have been attained.

At the age of forty-six Robert Southey wrote the first of a series of autobiographic sketches; his spirit was courageous, and life had been good to him: but it needed more than his courage to live again in remembrance with so many of the dead; having told the story of his boyhood, he had not the heart to go farther. The autobiography rambles pleasantly into by-ways of old Bath and Bristol life; at Westminster School it leaves him. So far we shall go along with it; for what lies beyond, a record of Southey's career must be brought together from a multitude of letters, published or still remaining in manuscript, and from many and massy volumes in prose and verse, which show how the industrious hours sped by.

Southey's father was a linen-draper of Bristol. He had left his native fields under the Quantock hills to take service in a London shop, but his heart suffered in its exile. The tears were in his eyes one day when a porter went by carrying a hare, and the remembrance suddenly came to him of his rural sports. On his master's death he took a place behind the counter of Britton's shop in Wine Street, Bristol; and when, twelve years later, he opened a shop for himself in the same business, he had, with tender reminiscence, a hare painted for a device upon his windows. He kept his grandfather's sword which had been borne in Monmouth's rebellion; he loved the chimes and quarter-boys of Christ Church, Bristol, and tried, as church-warden, to preserve them. What else of poetry there may have been in the life of Robert Southey the elder is lost among the buried epics of prosaic lives. We cannot suppose that as a man of business he was sharp and shrewd; he certainly was not successful. When the draper's work was done he whiled away the hours over Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, his only reading. For library some score of books shared with his wine-glasses the small cupboard in the back parlor; its chief treasures were the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, some eighteenth-century poems, dead even then, and one or two immortal plays.

On Sundays Mr. Southey, then a bachelor, would stroll to Bedminster to dine at the pleasant house of Mrs. Hill—a substantial house to which Edward Hill, gentleman, brought his second wife, herself a widow; a house rich in old English comfort, with its diamond-tiled garden-way and jessamine-covered porch, its wainscoted "best kitchen," its blue room and green room and yellow room, its grapes and greengages and nectarines, its sweet-williams and stocks and syringas. Among these pleasant surroundings the young draper found it natural, on Sabbath afternoons, to make love to pleasant

Margaret Hill. "Never," writes her son, Robert Southey—"never was any human being blessed with a sweeter temper or a happier disposition." Her face had been marred by the seams of small-pox, but its brightness and kindness remained; there was a charm in her clear hazel eyes, so good a temper and so alert an understanding were to be read in them. She had not gone to any school except one for dancing, and "her state," declares Southey, "was the more gracious;" her father had, however, given her lessons in the art of whistling; she could turn a tune like a blackbird. From a mother, able to see a fact swiftly and surely, and who knew both to whistle and to dance, Southey inherited that alertness of intellect and that joyous temper, without which he could not have accomplished his huge task-work, never yielding to a mood of rebellion or *ennui*.

After the courtship on Sunday afternoons came the wedding, and before long a beautiful boy was born, who died in infancy. On the 12th of August, 1774, Mrs. Southey was again in the pain of childbirth. "Is it a boy?" she asked the nurse. "Ay, a great ugly boy!" With such salutation from his earliest critic the future poet-laureate entered this world. "God forgive me," his mother exclaimed afterwards, in relating the event, "when I saw what a great red creature it was, covered with rolls of fat, I thought I should never be able to love him." In due time the red creature proved to be a distinctively human child, whose curly hair and sensitive feelings made him a mother's darling. He had not yet heard of sentiment or of Rousseau, but he wept at the pathos of romantic literature, at the tragic fate of the "Children sliding on the ice all on a summer's day," or the too early death of "Billy Pringle's pig," and he would beg the reciters not to proceed. His mother's household cares multiplied, and Southey, an unbreeched boy of three years, was borne away one morning by his faithful foster-mother Patty to be handed over to the tender mercies of a schoolmistress. Ma'am Powell was old and grim, and with her lashless eyes gorgonized the new pupil; on the seizure of her hand he woke to rebellion, kicking lustily, and crying, "Take me to Pat! I don't like ye! you've got ugly eyes! take me to Pat, I say!" But soft-hearted Pat had gone home, sobbing.

Mrs. Southey's one weakness was that of submitting too meekly to the tyranny of an imperious half-sister, Miss Tyler, the daughter of Grandmother Hill by her first marriage. For this weakness there were excuses: Miss Tyler was an elder sister by many years; she had property of her own; she passed for a person of fashion, and was still held to be a beauty; above all, she had the advantage of a temper so capricious and violent that to quarrel with her at all might be to lose her sisterly regard forever. Her struggling sister's eldest son took Aunt Tyler's fancy; it a was part of her imperious kindness to adopt or half-adopt the boy. Aunt Tyler lived in Bath; in no other city could a gentlewoman better preserve health and good looks, or enjoy so much society of distinction on easy but not too ample means;

it possessed a charming theatre, and Miss Tyler was a patron of the drama. To Bath, then, she had brought her portrait by Gainsborough, her inlaid cabinet of ebony, her cherry-wood arm-chair, her mezzotints after Angelica Kaufmann, her old-maid hoards of this and of that, the woman-servant she had saved from the toils of matrimony, and the old man, harmless as one of the crickets which he nightly fed until he died. To Bath Miss Tyler also brought her nephew ; and she purchased a copy of the new gospel of education, Rousseau's *Emilius*, in order to ascertain how Nature should have her perfect work with a boy in petticoats. Here the little victim, without companions, without play, without the child's beatitudes of dirt and din, was carefully swathed in the odds and ends of habits and humors which belonged to a maiden lady of a whimsical, irrational, and self-indulgent temper. Miss Tyler, when not prepared for company, wandered about the house—a faded beauty—in the most faded and fluttering of costumes ; but in her rags she was spotless. To preserve herself and her worldly gear from the dust, forever floating and gathering in this our sordid atmosphere, was the business of her life. Her acquaintances she divided into the clean and the unclean—the latter class being much the more numerous. Did one of the unclean take a seat in her best room, the infected chair must be removed to the garden to be aired. But did he seat himself in Miss Tyler's own arm-chair, pressing his abominable person into Miss Tyler's own cushion, then passionate were her dismay and despair. To her favorites she was gracious and high-bred, regaling them with reminiscences of Lady Bateman, and with her views on taste, Shakespere, and the musical glasses. For her little nephew she invented the pretty recreation of pricking play-bills ; all capital letters were to be illuminated with pin-holes ; it was not a boisterous nor an ungenteel sport. At other times the boy would beguile the hours in the garden, making friends with flowers and insects, or looking wistfully towards that sham castle on Claverton Hill, seat of romantic mystery, but, alas ! two miles away, and therefore beyond the climbing powers of a refined gentlewoman. Southey's hardest daily trial was the luxurious morning captivity of his aunt's bed ; still at nine, at ten, that lady lay in slumber ; the small urchin, long perked up and broad awake, feared by sound or stir to rouse her, and would nearly wear his little wits away in plotting rearrangements of the curtain pattern, or studying the motes at mazy play in the slant sunbeam. His happiest season was when all other little boys were fast asleep ; then, splendid in his gayest "jam," he sat beside Miss Tyler in a front row of the best part of the theatre ; when the yawning fits had passed, he was as open-eyed as the oldest, and stared on, filling his soul with the spectacle till the curtain fell.

The "great red creature," Robert Southey, had now grown into the lean greyhound of his after-life ; his long legs wanted to be stirring, and there were childish ambitions already at work in his head. Freedom became dearer to him than the daintiest cage, and when at six, he returned to his father's house in Wine Street, it was with rejoicing. Now, too, his aunt issued an edict that the long-legged lad should be breeched; an epoch of life was complete. Wine Street, with its freedom, seemed good; but best of all was a visit to Grandmother Hill's pleasant house at Bedminster. "Here I had all wholesome liberty, all wholesome indulgence, all wholesome enjoyments; and the delight which I there learnt to take in rural sights and sounds has grown up with me, and continues unabated to this day." And now that scrambling process called education was to begin. A year was spent by Southey as a day-scholar with old Mr. Foot, a dissenting minister, whose unorthodoxy as to the doctrine of the Trinity was in some measure compensated by sound traditional views as to the uses of the cane. Mr. Foot, having given proof on the back of his last and his least pupil of steadfastness in the faith according to Busby, died; and it was decided that the boy should be placed under Thomas Flower, who kept school at Corston, nine miles from Bristol. To a tender other's heart nine miles seemed a breadth of severance cruel as an Atlantic. Mrs. Southey, born to be happy herself, and to make others happy, had always heretofore met her son with a smile; now he found her weeping in her chamber; with an effort, such as Southey, man and boy, always knew how to make on like occasions, he gulped down his own rising sob, and tried to brighten her sorrow with a smile.

A boy's first night at school is usually not a time of mirth. The heart of the solitary little lad at Corston sank within him. A melancholy hung about the decayed mansion which had once known better days; the broken gateways, the summer-houses falling in ruins, the grass-grown court, the bleakness of the school-room, ill-disguised by its faded tapestry, depressed the spirits. Southey's pillow was wet with tears before he fell asleep. The master was at one with his surroundings; he, too, was a piece of worthy old humanity now decayed; he, too, was falling in untimely ruins. From the memory of happier days, from the troubles of his broken fortune, from the vexations of the drunken maid-servant who was now his wife, he took refuge in contemplating the order and motions of the stars. "When he came into his desk, even there he was thinking of the stars, and looked as if he were out of humor, not from ill-nature, but because his calculations were interrupted." Naturally the work of the school, such as it was, fell, for the most part, into the hands of Charley, Thomas Flower's son. Both father and son knew the mystery of that flamboyant penmanship admired by our ancestors, but Southey's handwriting had not yet advanced from the early rounded to the decorated style. His spelling he could look back upon with pride: on one occasion a grand spelling tournament between the boys took place; and little Southey can hardly have failed to overthrow his taller adversaries with the posers, "crystallization" and "coterie." The househlod arrangements at Corston, as may be supposed, were not of the most perfect kind; Mrs. Flower had so deep an interest in her bottle, and poor Thomas Flower in his planets. The boys each morning washed themselves, or did not, in the brook ankle-deep which ran through the yard. In autumn the brook grew deeper and more swift, and after a gale it would bring within bounds a tribute of floating apples from the neighboring orchard. That was a merry day, also in autumn, when the boys were employed to pelt the master's walnut-trees; Southey, too small to bear his part in the battery, would glean among the fallen leaves and twigs, inhaling the penetrating fragrance which ever after called up a vision of the brook, the hillside, and its trees. One schoolboy sport—that of "conquering" with snail-shells—seems to have been the special invention of Corston. The snail-shells, not tenantless, were pressed point against point until one was broken in. A great conqueror was prodigiously prized, was treated with honorable distinction, and was not exposed to danger save in great emergencies. One who had slain his hundreds might rank with Rodney, to see whom the boys had marched down to the Globe Inn, and for whom they had cheered and waved their Sunday cocked hats as he passed by. So, on the whole, life at Corston had its pleasures. Chief among its pains was the misery of Sunday evenings in winter; then the pupils were assembled in the hall to hear the master read a sermon, or a portion of Stackhouse's *History of the Bible.* "Here," writes Southey, "I sat at the end of a long form, in sight but not within feeling of the fire, my feet cold, my eyelids heavy as lead, and yet not daring to close them—kept awake by fear alone, in total inaction and under the operation of a lecture more soporific than the strongest sleeping dose." While the boys' souls were thus provided for, there was a certain negligence in matters unspiritual; an alarm got abroad that infection was among them. This hastened the downfall of the school. One night disputing was heard between Charley and his father; in the morning poor Flower was not to be seen, and Charley appeared with a black eye. So came to an end the year at Corston. Southey, aged eight, was brought home, and underwent "a three days' purgatory in brimstone." *

What Southey had gained of book-lore by his two years' schooling was as little as could be; but he was already a lover of literature after a fashion of his own. A friend of Miss Tyler had presented him, as soon as he could read, with a series of Newberry's sixpenny books for children—*Goody Twoshoes, Giles Gingerbread,* and the rest—delectable histories, resplendent in Dutch-gilt paper. The true masters of his imagination, however, were the players and play-wrights who provided amusement for the pleasure-loving people of Bath. Miss Tyler was acquainted with Colman, and Sheridan, and Cumberland, and Holcroft; her talk was of actors and authors, and her nephew soon perceived that, honored as were both classes, the authors were awarded the higher place. His first dreams of literary fame, accordingly, were connected with the drama. "'It is the easiest thing in the world to write a play,' said I to Miss Palmer (a friend of Aunt Tyler's), as we were in a carriage on Redcliffe Hill one day, returning from Bristol to Bedminster. 'Is it, my dear?' was her reply. 'Yes,' I continued, 'for you know you have only to think what you would say if you were in the place of the characters, and to make them say it.'" With such a canon of dramatic authorship Southey began a play on the continence of Scipio, and actually completed an act and a half. Shakespere he read and read again; Beaumont and Fletcher he had gone through before he was eight years old. Were they not great theatrical names, Miss Tyler reasoned, and therefore improving writers for her nephew? and Southey had read them unharmed. When he visited his aunt from Corston, she was a guest with Miss Palmer at Bath; a covered passage led to the playhouse, and every evening the delighted child, seated between the two lady-patronesses of the stage, saw the pageantry and heard the poetry. A little later he persuaded a schoolfellow to write a tragedy; Ballard liked the suggestion, but could not invent a plot. Southey gave him a story; Ballard approved, but found a difficulty in devising names for the *dramatis personæ*. Southey supplied a list of heroic names: they were just what Ballard wanted—but he was at a loss to know what the characters should say. "I made the same attempt," continued Southey, "with another schoolfellow, and with no better success. It seemed to me very odd that they should not be able to write plays as well as to do their lessons."

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* Recollections of Corston, somewhat in the manner of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, will be found in Southey's early poem, *The Retrospect.*

The ingenious Ballard was an ornament of the school of William Williams, whither Southey was sent as a day-boarder after the catastrophe of Corston. Under the care of this kindly, irascible, little, bewigged old Welshman, Southey remained during four years. Williams was not a model schoolmaster, but he was a man of character and of a certain humorous originality. In two things he believed with all the energy of his nature—in his own spelling-book printed for his own school, and in the Church Catechism. Latin was left to the curate; when Southey reached Virgil, old Williams, delighted with classical attainments rare among his pupils, thought of taking the boy into his own hands, but his little Latin had faded from his brain; and the curate himself seemed to have reached his term in the *Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi*, so that to Southey, driven round and round the pastoral paddock, the names of Tityrus and Melibœus became forever after symbols of *ennui*. No prosody was taught: "I am," said Southey, "at this day as liable to make a false quantity as any Scotchman." The credit, however, is due to Williams of having discovered in his favorite pupil a writer of English prose. One day each boy of a certain standing was called upon to write a letter on any subject he pleased: never had Southey written a letter except the formal one dictated at Corston which began with "Honored Parents." He cried for perplexity and vexation; but Williams encouraged him, and presently a description of Stonehenge filled his slate. The old man was surprised and delighted. A less amiable feeling possessed Southey's schoolfellows: a plan was forthwith laid for his humiliation—could he tell them, fine scholar that he was, what the letters *i.e.* stand for? Southey, never lacking in courage, drew a bow at a venture: for John the Evangelist.

The old Welshman, an original himself, had an odd following of friends and poor retainers. There was the crazy rhymester known as "Dr. Jones;" tradition darkly related that a dose of cantharides administered by waggish boys of a former generation had robbed him of his wits. "The most celebrated *improvisatore* was never half so vain of his talent as this queer creature, whose little figure of some five-feet-two I can perfectly call to mind, with his suit of rusty black, his more rusty wig, and his old cocked hat. Whenever he entered the schoolroom he was greeted with a shout of welcome." There was also Pullen, the breeches-maker—a glorious fellow, brimful of vulgarity, prosperity, and boisterous good-nature; above all, an excellent hand at demanding a half-holiday. A more graceful presence, but a more fleeting, was that of Mrs. Estan, the actress, who came to learn from the dancing-master her *minuet de la cour* in *The Belle's Stratagem.* Southey himself had to submit to lessons in dancing. Tom Madge, his constant partner, had limbs that went every way; Southey's limbs would go no way: the spectacle presented by their joint endeavors was one designed for the pencil of Cruikshank. In the art of reading aloud Miss Tyler had herself instructed her nephew, probably after the manner of the most approved tragedy queens. The grand style did not please honest Williams. "Who taught you to read?" he asked, scornfully. "My aunt," answered Southey. "Then give my compliments to your aunt, and tell her that my old horse, that has been dead these twenty years, could have taught you as well"—a message which her nephew, with the appalling frankness of youth, delivered, and which was never forgotten.

While Southey was at Corston his grandmother died; the old lady with the large, clear, brown, bright eyes, seated in her garden, was no more to be seen, and the Bedminster house, after a brief occupation by Miss Tyler, was sold. Miss Tyler spoke of Bristol society with a disdainful sniff; it was her choice to wander for a while from one genteel watering-place to another. When Williams gave Southey his first summer holidays, he visited his aunt at Weymouth. The hours spent there upon the beach were the most spiritual hours of Southey's boyhood; he was for the first time in the face of the sea—the sea vast, voiceful, and mysterious. Another epoch-making event occurred about the same time; good Mrs. Dolignon, his aunt's friend, gave him a book—the first which became his very own since that present of the toy-books of Newbery. It was Hoole's translation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*; in it a world of poetical adventure was opened to the boy. The notes to Tasso made frequent reference to Ariosto; Bull's Circulating Library at Bath—a Bodleian to Southey—supplied him with the version, also by Hoole, of the *Orlando Furioso;* here was a forest of old romance in which to lose himself. But a greater discovery was to come; searching the notes again, Southey found mention made of Spenser, and certain stanzas of Spenser's chief poem were quoted. "Was the *Faerie Queene* on Bull's shelves?" "Yes," was the answer; "they had it, but it was in obsolete language, and the young gentleman would not understand it." The young gentleman, who had already gone through Beaumont and Fletcher, was not daunted; he fell to with the keenest relish, feeling in Spenser the presence of something which was lacking in the monotonous couplets of Hoole, and charming himself unaware with the music of the stanza. Spenser, "not more sweet than pure, and not more pure than wise,"

> "High-priest of all the Muses' mysteries." *

was henceforth accepted by Southey as his master.

When Miss Tyler had exhausted her friends' hospitality, and had grown tired of lodgings, she settled in a pleasant suburban nook at Bristol; but having a standing quarrel with Thomas Southey, her sister's brother-in-law, she would never set foot in the house in Wine Street, and she tried to estrange her nephew, as far as possible, from his natural home. Her own brother William, a half-witted creature, she brought to live with her. "The Squire," as he was called, was hardly a responsible being, yet he had a sort of *half-saved* shrewdness, and a memory stored with old saws, which, says Southey, "would have qualified him, had he been born two centuries earlier, to have worn motley, and figured with a cap and bells and a bauble in some baron's hall." A saying of his "Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost," was remembered by Southey in after-years; and when it was turned into Greek by Coleridge, to serve as motto to *The Curse of Kehama*, a mysterious reference was given—*Αποφθ. Ανεκ. του Γυλίελ. του Μητ.* With much beer-swilling and tobacco-chewing, premature old age came upon him. He would sit for hours by the kitchen fire, or, on warm days, in the summer-house, his eyes intently following the movements of the neighbors. He loved to play at marbles with his nephew, and at loo with Miss Tyler; most of all, he loved to be taken to the theatre. The poor Squire had an affectionate heart; he would fondle children with tenderness, and at his mother's funeral his grief was overwhelming. A companion of his own age Southey found in Shadrach Weekes, the boy of all work, a brother of Miss Tyler's maid. Shad and his young master would scour the country in search of violet and cowslip roots, and the bee and fly orchis, until wood and rock by the side of the Avon had grown familiar and had grown dear; and now, instead of solitary pricking of play-bills, Southey set to work, with the help of Shad, to make and fit up such a theatre for puppets as would have been the pride even of Wilhelm Meister.

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* Carmen Nuptiale: Proem, 18.

But fate had already pronounced that Southey was to be poet, and not player. Tasso and Ariosto and Spenser claimed him, or so he dreamed. By this time he had added to his epic cycle Pope's *Homer* and Mickle's *Lusiad*. That prose romance, embroidered with sixteenth-century affectations, but with a true chivalric sentiment at its heart, Sidney's *Arcadia*, was also known to him. He had read Arabian and mock-Arabian tales; he had spent the pocket-money of many weeks on a Josephus, and he had picked up from Goldsmith something of Greek and Roman history. So breathed upon by poetry, and so furnished with erudition, Southey, at twelve years old, found it the most natural thing in the world to become an epic poet. His removal from the old Welshman's school having been hastened by that terrible message which Miss Tyler could not forgive, Southey, before proceeding to Westminster, was placed for a year under a clergyman, believed to be competent to carry his pupils beyond Tityrus and Melibœus. But, except some skill in writing English themes, little was gained from this new tutor. The year, however, was not lost. "I do not remember," Southey writes, "in any part of my life to have been so conscious of intellectual improvement . . . an improvement derived not from books or instruction, but from constantly exercising myself in English verse." "Arcadia" was the title of his first dream-poem; it was to be grafted upon the *Orlando Furioso*, with a new hero, and in a new scene; this dated from his ninth or tenth year, and some verses were actually composed. The epic of the Trojan Brutus and that of King Richard III. were soon laid aside, but several folio sheets of an *Egbert* came to be written. The boy's pride and ambition were solitary and shy. One day he found a lady, a visitor of Miss Tyler's, with the sacred sheets of *Egbert* in her hand; her compliments on his poem were deeply resented; and he determined henceforth to write his epics in a private cipher. Heroic epistles, translations from Latin poetry, satires, descriptive and moral pieces, a poem in dialogue exhibiting the story of the Trojan war, followed in rapid succession; last, a "Cassibelan," of which three books were completed. Southey, looking back on these attempts, notices their deficiency in plan, in construction. "It was long before I acquired this power—not fairly, indeed, till I was about five or six and thirty; and it was gained by practice, in the course of which I learnt to perceive wherein I was deficient."

One day in February, 1788, a carriage rumbled out of Bath, containing Miss Palmer, Miss Tyler, and Robert Southey, now a tall, lank boy with high-poised head, brown curling hair, bright hazel eyes, and an expression of ardor and energy about the lips and chin. The ladies were on their way to London for some weeks' diversion, and

Robert Southey was on his way to school at Westminster. For a while he remained an inconvenient appendage of his aunt's, wearying of the great city, longing for Shad and the carpentry, and the Gloucester meadows and the Avon cliffs, and the honest eyes and joyous bark of poor Phillis. April the first—ominous morning—arrived; Southey was driven to Dean's Yard; his name was duly entered; his boarding-house determined; his tutor chosen; farewells were said, and he found himself in a strange world, alone.

CHAPTER II.

WESTMINSTER, OXFORD, PANTISOCRACY, AND MARRIAGE.

Of Southey during his four years at Westminster we know little; his fragment of autobiography, having brought him to the school, soon comes to an untimely close; and for this period we possess no letters. But we know that these were years which contributed much to form his intellect and character; we know that they were years of ardor and of toil; and it is certain that now, as heretofore, his advance was less dependent on what pastors and masters did for him than on what he did for himself. The highest scholarship — that which unites precision with breadth, and linguistic sciencewith literary feeling—Southey never attained in any foreign tongue, except perhaps in the Portuguese and the Spanish. Whenever the choice lay between pausing to trace out a law of language, or pushing forward to secure a good armful of miscellaneous facts, Southey preferred the latter. With so many huge structures of his own in contemplation, he could not gather too much material, nor gather it too quickly. Such fortitude as goes to make great scholars he possessed; his store of patience was inexhaustible; but he could be patient only in pursuit of his proper objects. He could never learn a language in regular fashion; the best grammar, he said, was always the shortest. Southey's acquaintance with Greek never got beyond that stage at which Greek, like fairy gold, is apt to slip away of a sudden unless kept steadfastly in view; nearly all the Greek he had learnt at Westminster he forgot at Oxford. A monkish legend in Latin of the Church or a mediæval Latin chronicle he could follow with the run of the eye; but had he at any season of his manhood been called on to write a page of Latin prose, it would probably have resembled the French in which he sometimes sportively addressed his friends by letter, and in which he uttered himself valiantly while travelling abroad.

Southey brought to Westminster an imagination stored with the marvels and the beauty of old romance. He left it skilled in the new sentiment of the time—a sentiment which found in Werther and Eloisa its dialect, high-pitched, self-conscious, rhapsodical, and not wholly real. His bias for history was already marked before he entered the school; but his knowledge consisted of a few clusters of historical facts grouped around the subjects of various projected epics, and dotting at wide distances and almost at random the vast expanse of time. Now he made acquaintance with that book which, more than any other, displays the breadth, the variety, and the independence of the visible lives of nations. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* leaves a reader cold who cares only to quicken his own inmost being by contact with what is most precious in man's spiritual history; one chapter of Augustine's *Confessions*, one sentence of the *Imitation*—each a live coal from off the altar—will be of more worth to such an one than all the mass and labored majesty of Gibbon. But one who can gaze with a certain impersonal regard on the spectacle of the world will find the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, more than almost any other single book, replenish and dilate the mind. In it Southey viewed for the first time the sweep, the splendor, the coils, the mighty movement, of the stream of human affairs.

Southey's ambition on entering Westminster was to have the friendship of the youths who had acted in the last Westminster play, and whose names he had seen in the newspaper. Vain hope! for they, already preparing to tie their hair in tails, were looking onward to the great world, and had no glance to cast on the unnoted figures of the under-fourth. The new-comer, according to a custom of the school, was for a time effaced, ceasing to exist as an individual entity, and being known only as "shadow" of the senior boy chosen to be "substance" to him during his novitiate. Southey accepted his effacement the more willingly because George Strachey, his substance, had a good face and a kindly heart; unluckily—Strachey boarding at home—they were parted each night. A mild young aristocrat, joining little with the others, was head of the house; and Southey, unprotected by his chief, stood exposed to the tyranny of a fellow-boarder bigger and brawnier than himself, who would souse the ears of his sleeping victim with water, or on occasions let fly the porter-pot or the poker at his head. Aspiring beyond these sallies to a larger and freer style of humor, he attempted one day to hang Southey out of an upper window by the leg; the pleasantry was taken ill by the smaller boy, who offered an effectual resistance, and soon obtained his remove to another chamber. Southey's mature judgment of boarding-school life was not, on the whole, favorable; yet to Westminster he owed two of his best and dearest possessions—the friendship of C. W. W. Wynn, whose generous loyalty alone made it possible for Southey to pursue literature as his profession, and the friendship, no less precious, of Grosvenor Bedford, lasting green and fresh from boyhood until both were white-haired, venerable men.

Southey's interest in boyish sports was too slight to beguile him from the solitude needful for the growth of a poet's mind. He had thoughts of continuing Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; he planned six books to complete the *Fairy Queen*, and actually wrote some cantos; already the subject of *Madoc* was chosen. And now a gigantic conception, which at a later time was to bear fruit in such poems as *Thalaba* and *Kehama*, formed itself in his mind. "When I was a schoolboy at Westminster," he writes, "I frequented the house of a schoolfellow who has continued till this day to be one of my most intimate and dearest friends. The house was so near Dean's Yard that it was hardly considered as being out of our prescribed bounds; and I had free access to the library, a well-stored and pleasant room . . . looking over the river. There many of my truant hours were delightfully spent in reading Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*. The book impressed my imagination strongly; and before I left school I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more prominent and poetical forms of mythology, which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of a heroic poem." Southey's huge design was begotten upon his *pia mater* by a folio in a library. A few years earlier, Wordsworth, a boy of fourteen, walking between Hawkshead and Ambleside, noticed the boughs and leaves of an oak-tree intensely outlined in black against a bright western sky. "That moment," he says, "was important in my poetical history, for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them; and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency." Two remarkable incidents in the history of English poetry, and each with something in it of a typical character.

At Westminster Southey obtained his first literary profits—the guerdon of the silver penny to which Cowper alludes in his *Table-Talk*. Southey's penny—exchanged for current coin in the proportion of six to one by the mistress of the boarding-house—was always awarded for English composition. But his fame among his schoolfellows was not of an early or sudden growth. In the year of Southey's entrance, some of the senior boys commenced a weekly paper called *The Trifler*. It imitates, with some skill, the periodical essay of the post-Johnsonian period; there is the wide-ranging discussion on the Influence of Liberty on Genius; there is the sprightly sketch of Amelia, a learned Lady; there is the moral diatribe on Deists, a Sect of Infidels most dangerous to Mankind; there are the letters from Numa and from Infelix; there is the Easternapologue, beginning, "In the city of Bassora lived Zaydor, the son of Al-Zored." Southey lost no time in sending to the editor his latest verses; a baby sister, Margaretta, had just died, and Southey expressed in elegy a grief which was real and keen. "The Elegy signed B. is received"—so Mr. Timothy Touchstone announced on the Saturday after the manuscript had been dropped into the penny post. The following Saturday—anxiously expected—brought no poem, but another announcement: "The Elegy by B. must undergo some Alterations; a Liberty I must request all my Correspondents to permit me to take." "After this," says Southey, "I looked for its appearance anxiously, but in vain." Happily no one sought to discover B., or supposed that he was one with the curly-headed boy of the under-fourth.

If authorship has its hours of disappointment, it has compensating moments of glory and of joy. *The Trifler*, having lived to the age of ten months, deceased. In 1792 Southey, now a great boy, with Strachey, his sometime "substance," and his friends Wynn and Bedford, planned a new periodical of ill-omened name, *The Flagellant.* "I well remember my feelings," he writes, "when the first number appeared. . . . It was Bedford's writing, but that circumstance did not prevent me from feeling that I was that day borne into the world as an author; and if ever my head touched the stars while I walked upon the earth, it was then. . . . In all London there was not so vain, so happy, so elated a creature as I was that day." From that starry altitude he soon descended. The subject of an early number of *The Flagellant* was flogging; the writer was Robert Southey. He was full of Gibbon at the time, and had caught some of Voltaire's manner of poignant irony. Rather for disport of his wits than in the character of a reformer, the writer of number five undertook to prove from the ancients and the Fathers that flogging was an invention of the devil. During Southey's life the devil received many insults at his hands; his horns, his hoofs, his teeth, his tail, his moral character, were painfully referred to; and the devil took it, like a sensible fiend, in good part. Not so Dr. Vincent; the preceptorial dignity was impugned by some unmannerly brat; a bulwark of the British Constitution was at stake. Dr. Vincent made haste to prosecute the publisher for libel. Matters having taken unexpectedly so serious a turn, Southey came forward, avowed himself the writer, and with some sense of shame in yielding to resentment so unwarranted and so dull, he offered his apology. The head-master's wrath still held on its way, and Southey was privately expelled.

All Southey's truant hours were not passed among folios adorned with strange sculptures. In those days even St. Peter's College, Westminster, could be no little landlocked bay—silent, secure, and dull. To be in London was to be among the tides and breakers of the world. Every post brought news of some startling or significant event. Now it was that George Washington had been elected first President of the American Republic; now that the States-General were assembled at Versailles; now that Paris, delivered from her nightmare towers of the Bastille, breathed free; now that Brissot was petitioning for dethronement. The main issues of the time were such as to try the spirits. Southey, who was aspiring, hopeful, and courageous, did not hesitate in choosing a side; a new dawn was opening for the world, and should not his heart have its portion in that dawn?

The love of our own household which surrounds us like the air, and which seems inevitable as our daily meat and drink, acquires a strange preciousness when we find that the world can be harsh. The expelled Westminster boy returned to Bristol, and faithful Aunt Tyler welcomed him home; Shad did not avert his face, and Phillis looked up at him with her soft spaniel eyes. But Bristol also had its troubles; the world had been too strong for the poor linen-draper in Wine Street; he had struggled to maintain his business, but without success; his fortune was now broken, and his heart broke with it. In some respects it was well for Southey that his father's affairs gave him definite realities to attend to; for, in the quiet and vacancy of the days in Miss Tyler's house, his heart took unusual heats and chills, and even his eager verse-writing could not allay the excitement nor avert the despondent fit. When Michaelmas came, Southey went up to Oxford to matriculate; it was intended that he should enter at Christ Church, but the dean had heard of the escapade at Westminster; there was a laying of big-wigs together over that adventure, and the young rebel was rejected; to be received, however, by Balliol College. But to Southey it mattered little at the time whether he were of this college or of that; a summons had reached him to hasten to Bristol that he might follow his father's body to the grave, and now his thoughts could not but cling to his mother in her sorrow and her need.

"I left Westminster," says Southey, "in a perilous state—a heart full of poetry and feeling, a head full of Rousseau and Werther, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon: many circumstances tended to give me a wrong bias, none to lead me right, except adversity, the wholesomest of all discipline." The young republican went up to chambers in Rat Castle—since departed—near the head of Balliol Grove, prepared to find in Oxford the seat of pedantry, prejudice, and aristocracy; an airy sense of his own enlightenment and emancipation possessed him. He has to learn to pay respect to men "remarkable only for great wigs and little wisdom." He finds it "rather disgraceful at the moment when Europe is on fire with freedom—when man and monarch are contending—to sit and study Euclid and Hugo Grotius." Beside the enthusiasm proper in Southey's nature, there was at this time an enthusiasm prepense. He had learnt from his foreign masters the language of hyper-sensibility; his temperament was nervous and easily wrought upon; his spirit was generous and ardent. Like other youths with a facile literary talent before finding his true self, he created a number of artificial selves, who uttered for him his moralizings and philosophizings, who declaimed for him on liberty, who dictated long letters of sentimental platitudes, and who built up dream-fabrics of social and political reforms, chiefly for the pleasure of seeing how things might look in "the brilliant colors of fancy, nature, and Rousseau." In this there was no insincerity, though there was some unreality. "For life," he says, "I have really a very strong predilection," and the buoyant energy within him delayed the discovery of the bare facts of existence; it was so easy and enjoyable to become in turn sage, reformer, and enthusiast. Or perhaps we ought to say that all this time there was a real Robert Southey, strong, upright, ardent, simple; and although this was quite too plain a person to serve the purposes of epistolary literature, it was he who gave their cues to the various ideal personages. This, at least, may be affirmed—all Southey's unrealities were of a pure and generous cast; never was his life emptied of truth and meaning, and made in the deepest degree phantasmal by a secret shame lurking under a fair show. The youth Milton, with his grave upbringing, was happily not in the way of catching the trick of sentimental phrases; but even Milton at Cambridge, the lady of his College, was not more clean from spot or blemish than was Southey amid the vulgar riot and animalisms of young Oxford.

Two influences came to the aid of Southey's instinctive modesty, and confirmed him in all that was good. One was his friendship with Edmund Seward, too soon taken from him by death. The other was his discipleship to a great master of conduct. One in our own day has acknowledged the largeness of his debt to

> "That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
> Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
> Clear'd Rome of what most shamed him."

Epictetus came to Southey precisely when such a master was needed; other writers had affected him through his imagination, through his nervous sensibility; they had raised around him a luminous haze; they had plunged him deeper in illusion. Now was heard the voice of a conscience speaking to a conscience; the manner of speech was grave, unfigured, calm; above all, it was real, and the words bore in upon the hearer's soul with a quiet resistlessness. He had allowed his sensitiveness to set up what excitements it might please in his whole moral frame; he had been squandering his emotions; he had been indulging in a luxury and waste of passion. Here was a tonic and a styptic. Had Southey been declamatory about freedom? The bondsman Epictetus spoke of freedom also, and of how it might be obtained. Epictetus, like Rousseau, told of a life according to nature; he commended simplicity of manners. But Rousseau's simplicity, notwithstanding that homage which he paid to the will, seemed to heat the atmosphere with strange passion, seemed to give rise to new curiosities and refinements of self-conscious emotion. Epictetus showed how life could be simplified, indeed, by bringing it into obedience to a perfect law. Instead of a quietism haunted by feverish dreams—duty, action, co-operation with God. "Twelve years ago," wrote Southey in 1806, "I carried Epictetus in my pocket till my very heart was ingrained with it, as a pig's bones become red by feeding him upon madder. And the longer I live, and the more I learn, the more am I convinced that Stoicism, properly understood, is the best and noblest of systems." Much that Southey gained from Stoicism he kept throughout his whole life, tempered, indeed, by the influences of a Christian faith, but not lost. He was no metaphysician, and a master who had placed metaphysics first and morals after would hardly have won him for a disciple; but a lofty ethical doctrine spoke to what was deepest and most real in his nature. To trust in an overruling Providence, to accept the disposal of events not in our own power with a strenuous loyalty to our Supreme Ruler, to hold loose by all earthly possessions even the dearest, to hold loose by life itself while putting it to fullest use—these lessons he first learnt from the Stoic slave, and he forgot none of them. But his chief lesson was the large one of self-regulation, that it is a man's prerogative to apply the reason and the will to the government of conduct and to the formation of character.

By the routine of lectures and examinations Southey profited little; he was not driven into active revolt, and that was all. His tutor, half a democrat, surprised him by praising America, and asserting the right of every country to model its own forms of government. He added, with a pleasing frankness which deserves to be imitated, "Mr. Southey, you won't learn anything by my lectures, sir; so, if you have any studies of your own, you had better pursue them." Of all the months of his life, those passed at Oxford, Southey declared, were the most unprofitable. "All I learnt was a little swimming . . . and a little boating. . . . I never remember to have dreamt of Oxford—a sure proof how little it entered into my moral being; of school, on the contrary, I dream perpetually." The miscellaneous society of workers, idlers, dunces, bucks, men of muscle and men of money, did not please him; he lacked what Wordsworth calls "the congregating temper that pervades our unripe years." One or two friends he chose, and grappled them to his heart; above all, Seward, who abridged his hours of sleep for sake of study—whose drink was water, whose breakfast was dry bread; then, Wynn and Lightfoot. With Seward he sallied forth, in the Easter vacation, 1793, for a holiday excursion; passed, with "the stupidity of a democratic philosopher," the very walls of Blenheim, without turning from the road to view the ducal palace; lingered at Evesham, and wandered through its ruined Abbey, indulging in some passable mediæval romancing; reached Worcester and Kidderminster. "We returned by Bewdley. There is an old mansion, once Lord Herbert's, now mouldering away, in so romantic a situation, that I soon lost myself in dreams of days of yore; the tapestried room—the listed fight—the vassal-filled hall—the hospitable fire—the old baron and his young daughter—these formed a most delightful day-dream." The youthful democrat did not suspect that such day-dreams were treasonable—a hazardous caressing of the wily enchantress of the past; in his pocket he carried Milton's *Defence*, which may have been his amulet of salvation. Many and various elements could mingle in young brains a-seethe with revolution and romanticism. The fresh air and quickened blood at least put Southey into excellent spirits. "We must walk over Scotland; it will be an adventure to delight us all the remainder of our lives: we will wander over the hills of Morven, and mark the driving blast, perchance bestrodden by the spirit of Ossian!"

Among visitors to the Wye, in July, 1793, were William Wordsworth, recently returned from France, and Robert Southey, holiday-making from Oxford; they were probably unacquainted with each other at that time even by name. Wordsworth has left an undying memorial of his tour in the poem written near Tintern Abbey, five years later. Southey was drawing a long breath before he uttered himself in some thousands of blank verses. The father of his friend Bedford resided at Brixton Causeway, about four miles on the Surrey side of London; the smoke of the great city hung heavily beyond an intervening breadth of country; shady lanes led to the neighboring villages; the garden was a sunny solitude where flowers opened and fruit grew mellow, and bees and birds were happy. Here Southey visited his friend; his nineteenth birthday came; on the following morning he planted himself at the desk in the garden summer-house; morning after morning quickly passed; and by the end of six weeks *Joan of Arc*, an epic poem in twelve books, was written. To the subject Southey was attracted primarily by the exalted character of his heroine; but apart from this it possessed a twofold interest for him: England, in 1793, was engaged in a war against France—a war hateful to all who sympathized with the Republic; Southey's epic was a celebration of the glories of French patriotism, a narrative of victory over the invader. It was also chivalric and mediæval; the sentiment which was transforming the word Gothic, from a term of reproach to a word of vague yet mastering fascination, found expression in the young poet's treatment of the story of Joan of Arc. Knight and hermit, prince and prelate, doctors seraphic and irrefragable with their pupils, meet in it; the castle and the cathedral confront one another; windows gleam with many-colored light streaming through the rich robes of saint and prophet; a miracle of carven tracery branches overhead; upon the altar burns the mystic lamp.

The rough draft of *Joan* was hardly laid aside when Southey's sympathies with the revolutionary movement in France, strained already to the utmost point of tension, were fatally rent. All his faith, all his hope, were given to the Girondin party; and from the Girondins he had singled out Brissot as his ideal of political courage, purity, and wisdom. Brissot, like himself, was a disciple of Jean Jacques; his life was austere; he had suffered on behalf of freedom. On the day when the Bastile was stormed, its keys were placed in Brissot's hands; it was Brissot who had determined that war should be declared against the foreign foes of the Republic. But now the Girondins—following hard upon Marie Antoinette—were in the death-carts; they chanted their last hymn of liberty, ever growing fainter while the axe lopped head after head; and Brissot was among the martyrs (October 31st, 1793). Probably no other public event so deeply affected Southey. "I am sick of the world," he writes, "and discontented with every one in it. The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties. . . . I look round the world, and everywhere find the same spectacle—the strong tyrannizing over the weak, man and beast. . . . There is no place for virtue."

After this, though Southey did not lose faith in democratic principles, he averted his eyes for a time from France: how could he look to butchers who had shed blood which was the very life of liberty, for the realization of his dreams? And whither should he look? Had he but ten thousand republicans like himself, they might repeople Greece and expel the Turk. Being but one, might not Cowley's fancy, a cottage in America, be transformed into a fact: "three rooms . . . and my only companion some poor negro whom I have bought on purpose to emancipate"? Meanwhile he occupied a room in Aunt Tyler's house, and, instead of swinging the axe in some forest primeval, amused himself with splitting a wedge of oak in company with Shad, who might, perhaps, serve for the emancipated negro. Moreover, he was very diligently driving his quill: "I have finished transcribing *Joan*, and have bound her in marble paper with green ribbons, and am now copying all my remainables to carry to Oxford. Then once more a clear field, and then another epic poem, and then another." Appalling announcement! "I have accomplished a most arduous task, transcribing all my verses that appear worth the trouble, except letters. Of these I took one list—another of my pile of stuff and nonsense—and a third of what I have burnt and lost; upon an average 10,000 verses are burnt and lost; the same number preserved, and 15,000 worthless." Such sad mechanic exercise dulled the ache in Southey's heart; still "the visions of futurity," he finds, "are dark and gloomy, and the only ray that enlivens the scene beams on America."

To Balliol Southey returned; and if the future of the world seemed perplexing, so also did his individual future. His school and college expenses were borne by Mrs. Southey's brother, the Rev. Herbert Hill, chaplain to the British Factory at Lisbon. In him the fatherless youth found one who was both a friend and a father. Holbein's portrait of Sir Thomas More in his best years might have passed for that of Mr. Hill; there was the same benign thoughtfulness in his aspect, the same earnest calm, the same brightness and quietness, the same serene and cheerful strength. He was generous and judicious, learned and modest, and his goodness carried authority with it. Uncle Hill's plan had been that Southey, like himself, should become an English clergyman. But though he might have preached from an Unitarian pulpit, Southey could not take upon himself the vows of a minister of the Church of England. It would have instantly relieved his mother had he entered into orders. He longed that this were possible, and went through many conflicts of mind, and not a little anguish. "God knows I would exchange every intellectual gift which He has blessed me with, for implicit faith to have been able to do this;" but it could not be. To bear the reproaches, gentle yet grave, of his uncle was hard; to grieve his mother was harder. Southey resolved to go to the anatomy school, and fit himself to be a doctor. But he could not overcome his strong repugnance to the dissecting-room; it expelled him whether he would or no; and all the time literature, with still yet audible voice, was summoning him. Might he not obtain some official employment in London, and also pursue his true calling? Beside the desire of pleasing his uncle and of aiding his mother, the Stoic of twenty had now a stronger motive for seeking some immediate livelihood. "I shall joyfully bid adieu to Oxford," he writes, ". . . and, when I know my situation, unite myself to a woman whom I have long esteemed as a sister, and for whom I now indulge a warmer sentiment." But Southey's reputation as a dangerous Jacobin stood in his way; how could his Oxford overseers answer for the good behavior of a youth who spoke scornfully of Pitt.

The shuttles of the fates now began to fly faster, and the threads to twist and twine. It was June of the year 1794. A visitor from Cambridge was one day introduced to Southey; he seemed to be of an age near his own; his hair, parted in the middle, fell wavy upon his neck; his face, when the brooding cloud was not upon him, was bright with an abundant promise—a promise vaguely told in lines of the sweet full lips, in the luminous eyes, and the forehead that was like a god's. This meeting of Southey and Coleridge was an event which decided much in the careers of both. In the summer days and in youth, the meeting-time of spirits, they were drawn close to one another. Both had confessions to make, with many points in common; both were poets; both were democrats; both had hoped largely from France, and the hopes of both had been darkened; both were uncertain what part to take in life. We do not know whether Coleridge quickly grew so confidential as to tell of his recent adventure as Silas Titus Comberbatch of the 15th Light Dragoons. But we know that Coleridge had a lively admiration for the tall Oxford student—a person of distinction, so dignified, so courteous, so quick of apprehension, so full of knowledge, with a glance so rapid and piercing, with a smile so good and kind. And we know that Coleridge lost no time in communicating to Southey the hopes that were nearest to his heart.

Pantisocracy, word of magic, summed up these hopes. Was it not possible for a number of men like themselves, whose way of thinking was liberal, whose characters were tried and incorruptible, to join together and leave this old world of falling thrones and rival anarchies, for the woods and wilds of the young republic? One could wield an axe, another could guide a plough. Their wants would be simple and natural; their toil need not be such as the slaves of luxury endure, where possessions were held in common, each would work for all; in their cottages the best books would have a place; literature and science, bathed anew in the invigorating stream of life and nature, could not but rise reanimated and purified. Each young man should take to himself a mild and lovely woman for his wife; it would be her part to prepare their innocent food, and tend their hardy and beautiful race. So they would bring back the patriarchal age, and in the sober evening of life they would behold "colonies of independence in the undivided dale of industry." All the arguments in favor of such a scheme could not be set forth in a conversation, but Coleridge, to silence objectors, would publish a quarto volume on Pantisocracy and Aspheterism.

Southey heartily assented; his own thoughts had, with a vague forefeeling, been pointing to America; the unpublished epic would serve to buy a spade, a plough, a few acres of ground; he could assuredly split timber; he knew a mild and lovely woman for whom he indulged a warmer sentiment than that of a brother. Robert Lovell, a Quaker, an enthusiast, a poet, married to the sister of Southey's Edith, would surely join them; so would Burnett, his college friend; so, perhaps, would the admirable Seward. The long vacation was at hand. Being unable to take orders, or to endure the horrors of the dissecting-room, Southey must no longer remain a burden upon his uncle; he would quit the university and prepare for the voyage.

Coleridge departed to tramp it through the romantic valleys and mountains of Wales. Southey joined his mother, who now lived at Bath, and her he soon persuaded—as a handsome and eloquent son can persuade a loving mother—that the plan of emigration was feasible; she even consented to accompany her boy. But his aunt—an *esprit borné*—was not to hear a breath of Pantisocracy; still less would it be prudent to confess to her his engagement to Miss Edith Fricker. His Edith was penniless, and therefore all the dearer to Southey; her father had been an unsuccessful manufacturer of sugar-pans. What would Miss Tyler, the friend of Lady Bateman, feel? What words, what gestures, what acts, would give her feelings relief?

When Coleridge, after his Welsh wanderings, arrived in Bristol, he was introduced to Lovell, to Mrs. Lovell, to Mrs. Lovell's sisters, Edith and Sarah, and Martha and Elizabeth. Mrs. Lovell was doubtless already a pantisocrat; Southey had probably not found it difficult to convert Edith; Sarah, the elder sister, who was wont to look a mild reproof on over-daring speculations, seriously inclined to hear of pantisocracy from the lips of Coleridge. All members of the community were to be married. Coleridge now more than ever saw the propriety of that rule; he was prepared to yield obedience to it with the least possible delay. Burnett, also a pantisocrat, must also marry. Would Miss Martha Fricker join the community as Mrs. George Burnett? The lively little woman refused him scornfully; if he wanted a wife in a hurry, let him go elsewhere. The prospects of the reformers, this misadventure notwithstanding, from day to day grew brighter. "This Pantisocratic scheme," so writes Southey, "has given me new life, new hope, new energy; all the faculties of my mind are dilated."

Coleridge met a friend of Priestley's. But a few days since he had toasted the great doctor at Bala, thereby calling forth a sentiment from the loyal parish apothecary: "I gives a sentiment, gemmen! May all republicans be gulloteened!" The friend of Priestley's said that without doubt the doctor would join them. An American land-agent told them that for twelve men 2000*l.* would do. "He recommends the Susquehanna, from its excessive beauty and its security from hostile Indians." The very name—Susquehanna—sounded as if it were the sweetest of rippling rivers. Money, it is true, as Southey admits, "is a huge evil;" but now they are twenty-seven, and by resolute men this difficulty can be overcome.

It was evening of the 17th of October, a dark and gusty evening of falling rain and miry ways. Within Aunt Tyler's house in College Green, Bristol, a storm was bursting; she had heard it all at last—Pantisocracy, America, Miss Fricker. Out of the house he must march; there was the door; let her never see his face again. Southey took his hat, looked for the last time in his life at his aunt, then stepped out into the darkness and the rain. "Why, sir, you ben't going to to Bath at this time of night and in this weather?" remonstrated poor Shadrach. Even so; and with a friendly whisper master and man parted. Southey had not a penny in his pocket, and was lightly clad. At Lovell's he luckily found his father's great-coat; he swallowed a glass of brandy and set off on foot. Misery makes one acquainted with strange road-fellows. On the way he came upon an old man, drunk, and hardly able to stumble forward through the night: the young pantisocrat, mindful of his fellow-man, dragged him along nine miles amid rain and mire. Then, with weary feet, he reached Bath, and there was his mother to greet him with surprise, and to ask for explanations. "Oh, Patience, Patience, thou hast often helped poor Robert Southey, but never didst thou stand him in more need than on Friday, the 17th of October, 1794."

For a little longer the bow of hope shone in the West, somewhere over the Susquehanna, and then it gradually grew faint and faded. Money, that huge evil, sneered its cold negations. The chiefs consulted, and Southey proposed that a house and farm should be taken in Wales, where their principles might be acted out until better days enabled them to start upon their voyage. One pantisocrat, at least, could be happy with Edith, brown bread, and wild Welsh raspberries. But Coleridge objected: their principles could not be fairly tested under the disadvantage of an effete and adverse social state surrounding them; besides, where was the purchase-money to come from? how were they to live until the gathering of their first crops? It became clear that the realization of their plan must be postponed. The immediate problem was, How to raise 150*l.*? With such a sum they might both qualify by marriage for membership in the pantisocratical community. After that, the rest would somehow follow.

How, then, to raise 150*l.*? Might they not start a new magazine and become joint editors? The *Telegraph* had offered employment to Southey. "Hireling writer to a newspaper! 'Sdeath! 'tis an ugly title; but *n'importe.* I shall write truth, and only truth." The offer, however, turned out to be that of a reporter's place; and his troublesome guest, honesty, prevented his contributing to *The True Briton.* But he and Coleridge could at least write poetry, and perhaps publish it with advantage to themselves; and they could lecture to a Bristol audience. With some skirmishing lectures on various political subjects of immediate interest, Coleridge began; many came to hear them, and the applause was loud. Thus encouraged, he announced and delivered two remarkable courses of lectures—one, *A Comparative View of the English Rebellion under Charles I. and the French Revolution;* the other, *On Revealed Religion: its Corruptions and its Political Views.* Southey did not feel tempted to discuss the origin of evil or the principles of revolution. He chose as his subject a view of the course of European history from Solon and Lycurgus to the American War. His hearers were pleased by the graceful delivery and unassuming self-possession of the young lecturer, and were quick to recognize the unusual range of his knowledge, his just perception of facts, his ardor and energy of conviction. One lecture Coleridge begged permission to deliver in Southey's place—that on the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Roman Empire. Southey consented, and the room was thronged, but no lecturer appeared; they waited; still no lecturer. Southey offered an apology, and the crowd dispersed in no happy temper. It is likely, adds that good old gossip Cottle, who tells the story, "that at this very moment Mr. Coleridge might have been found at No. 48 College Street, composedly smoking his pipe, and lost in profound musings on his divine Susquehanna."

The good Cottle—young in 1795, a publisher, and unhappily a poet—rendered more important service to the two young men than that of smoothing down their ruffled tempers after this incident. Southey, in conjunction with Lovell, had already published a slender volume of verse. The pieces by Southey recall his schoolboy joys and sorrows, and tell of his mother's tears, his father's death, his friendship with "Urban," his love of "Ariste," lovely maid! his delight in old romance, his discipleship to Rousseau. They are chiefly of interest as exhibiting the diverse literary influences to which a young writer of genius was exposed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Here the couplet of Pope reappears, and hard by the irregular ode as practised by Akenside, the elegy as written by Gray, the unrhymed stanza which Collins's *Evening* made a fashion, the sonnet to which Bowles had lent a meditative grace, and the rhymeless measures imitated by Southey from Sayers, and afterwards made popular by his *Thalaba.* On the last page of this volume appear "Proposals for publishing by subscription *Joan of Arc;*" but subscriptions came slowly in. One evening Southey read for Cottle some books of *Joan.* "It can rarely happen," he writes, "that a young author should meet with a bookseller as inexperienced and as ardent as himself." Cottle offered to publish the poem in quarto, to make it the handsomest book ever printed in Bristol, to give the author fifty copies for his subscribers, and fifty pounds to put forthwith into his purse. Some dramatic attempts had recently been made by Southey, *Wat Tyler*, of which we shall hear more at a later date, and the *Fall of Robespierre*, undertaken by Coleridge, Lovell, and Southey, half in sport—each being pledged to produce an act in twenty-four hours. These were now forgotten, and all his energies were given to revising and in part recasting *Joan*. In six weeks his epic had been written; its revision occupied six months.

With summer came a great sorrow, and in the end of autumn a measureless joy. "He is dead," Southey writes, "my dear Edmund Seward! after six weeks' suffering. . . . You know not, Grosvenor, how I loved poor Edmund: he taught me all that I have of good. . . . There is a strange vacancy in my heart. . . . I have lost a friend, and such a one!" And then characteristically come the words: "I will try, by assiduous employment, to get rid of very melancholy thoughts." Another consolation Southey possessed: during his whole life he steadfastly believed that death is but the removal of a spirit from earth to heaven; and heaven for him meant a place where cheerful familiarity was natural, where, perhaps, he himself would write more epics and purchase more folios. As Baxter expected to meet among the saints above Mr. Hampden and Mr. Pym, so Southey counted upon the pleasure of having long talks with friends, of obtaining introductions to eminent strangers; above all, he looked forward to the joy of again embracing his beloved ones:

"Often together have we talked of death;
  How sweet it were to see
All doubtful things made clear;
  How sweet it were with powers
Such as the Cherubim
  To view the depth of Heaven!
O Edmund! thou hast first
  Begun the travel of eternity."

Autumn brought its happiness pure and deep. Mr. Hill had arrived from Lisbon; once again he urged his nephew to enter the church; but for one of Southey's opinions the church-gate "is perjury," nor does he even find church-going the best mode of spending his Sunday. He proposed to choose the law as his profession. But his uncle had heard of Pantisocracy, Aspheterism, and Miss Fricker, and said the law could wait; he should go abroad for six months, see Spain and Portugal, learn foreign languages, read foreign poetry and history, rummage among the books and manuscripts his uncle had collected in Lisbon, and afterwards return to his Blackstone. Southey, straightforward in all else, in love became a Machiavel. To Spain and Portugal he would go; his mother wished it; Cottle expected from him a volume of travels; his uncle had but to name the day. Then he sought Edith, and asked her to promise that before he departed she would become his wife; she wept to think that he was going, and yet persuaded him to go; consented, finally, to all that he proposed. But how was he to pay the marriage fees and buy the wedding-ring? Often this autumn he had walked the streets dinnerless, no pence in his pocket, no bread and cheese at his lodgings, thinking little, however, of dinner, for his head was full of poetry and his heart of love. Cottle lent him money for the ring and the license—and Southey in after-years never forgot the kindness of his honest friend. He was to accompany his uncle, but Edith was first to be his own; so she may honorably accept from him whatever means he can furnish for her support. It was arranged with Cottle's sisters that she should live with them, and still call herself by her maiden name. On the morning of the 14th of November, 1795—a day sad, yet with happiness underlying all sadness—Robert Southey was married in Redcliffe Church, Bristol, to Edith Fricker. At the church door there was a pressure of hands, and they parted with full hearts, silently—Mrs. Southey to take up her abode in Bristol, with the wedding-ring upon her breast, her husband to cross the sea. Never did woman put her happiness in more loyal keeping.

So by love and by poetry, by Edith Fricker and by Joan of Arc, Southey's life was being shaped. Powers most benign leaned forward to brood over the coming years and to bless them. It was decreed that his heart should be no homeless wanderer; that, as seasons went by, children should be in his arms and upon his knees; it was also decreed that he should become a strong toiler among books. Now Pantisocracy looked faint and far; the facts plain and enduring of the actual world took hold of his adult spirit. And Coleridge complained of this, and did not come to bid his friend farewell.

CHAPTER III.

NDERINGS, 1795—1803.

THROUGH pastoral Somerset, through Devon amid falling leaves, then over rough Cornish roads, the coach brought Southey—cold, hungry, and dispirited—to Falmouth. No packet there for Corunna; no packet starting before December 1st. The gap of time looked colorless and dreary, nor could even the philosophy of Epictetus lift him quite above "the things independent of the will." After a comfortless and stormy voyage, on the fifth morning the sun shone, and through a mist the barren cliffs of Galicia, with breakers tumbling at their feet, rose in sight. Who has not experienced, when first he has touched a foreign soil, how nature purges the visual nerve with lucky euphrasy? The shadowy streets, the latticed houses, the fountains, the fragments of Moorish architecture, the Jewish faces of the men, the lustrous eyes of girls, the children gayly bedizened, the old witch-like women with brown shrivelled parchment for skin, told Southey that he was far from home. Nor at night was he permitted to forget his whereabouts; out of doors cats were uttering soft things in most vile Spanish; beneath his blanket, familiars, bloodthirsty as those of the Inquisition, made him their own. He was not sorry when the crazy coach, drawn by six mules, received him and his uncle, and the journey eastward began to the shout of the muleteers and the clink of a hundred bells.

Some eighteen days were spent upon the road to Madrid. Had Southey not left half his life behind him in Bristol, those December days would have been almost wholly pleasurable. As it was, they yielded a large possession for the inner eye, and gave his heart a hold upon upon this new land which, in a certain sense, became forever after the land of his adoption. It was pleasant when, having gone forward on foot, he reached the crest of some mountain road, to look down on broken waters in the glen, and across to the little white-walled convent amid its chestnuts, and back to the dim ocean; there, on the summit to rest with the odor of furze blossoms and the tinkle of goats in the air, and, while the mules wound up the long ascent, to turn all this into hasty rhymes, ending with the thought of peace, and love, and Edith. Then the bells audibly approaching, and the loud-voiced muleteer consigning his struggling team to Saint Michael and three hundred devils; and then on to remoter hills, or moor and swamp, or the bridge flung across a ravine, or the path above a precipice, with mist and moonlight below. And next day some walled city, with its decaying towers and dim piazza; some church, with its balcony of ghastly skulls; some abandoned castle, or jasper-pillared Moorish gateway and gallery. Nor were the little inns and baiting-houses without compensations for their manifold discomforts. The Spanish country-folk were dirty and ignorant, but they had a courtesy unknown to English peasants; Southey would join the group around the kitchen fire, and be, as far as his imperfect speech allowed, one with the rustics, the carriers, the hostess, the children, the village barber, the familiar priest and the familiar pigs. When chambermaid Josepha took hold of his hair and gravely advised him never to tie it or to wear powder, she meant simple friendliness, no more. In his recoil from the dream of human perfectibility, Southey allowed himself at times to square accounts with common-sense by a cynical outbreak; but, in truth, he was a warm-hearted lover of his kind. Even feudalism and Catholicism had not utterly degraded the Spaniard. Southey thanks God that the pride of chivalry is extinguished; his Protestant zeal becomes deep-dyed in presence of our Lady of Seven

Sorrows and the Holy Napkin. "Here, in the words of Mary Wollstonecraft," he writes, "'the serious folly of Superstition stares every man of sense in the face.'" Yet Spain has inherited tender and glorious memories; by the river Ezla he recalls Montemayor's wooing of his Diana; at Tordesillas he muses on the spot where Queen Joanna watched by her husband's corpse, and where Padilla, Martyr of Freedom, triumphed and endured. At length the travellers, accompanied by Manuel, the most vivacious and accomplished of barbers, drew near Madrid, passed the miles of kneeling washerwomen and outspread clothes on the river banks, entered the city, put up at the Cruz de Malta, and were not ill-content to procure once more a well-cooked supper and a clean bed.

Southey pursued with ardor his study of the Spanish language, and could soon talk learnedly of its great writers. The national theatres, and the sorry spectacle of bullock-teasing, made a slighter impression upon him than did the cloisters of the new Franciscan Convent. He had been meditating his design of a series of poems to illustrate the mythologies of the world; here the whole portentous history of St. Francis was displayed upon the walls. "Do they believe all this, sir?" he asked Mr. Hill. "Yes, and a great deal more of the same kind," was the reply. My first thought was . . . here is a mythology not less wild and fanciful than any of those upon which my imagination was employed, and one which ought to be included in my ambitious design." Thus Southey's attention was drawn for the first time to the legendary and monastic history of the Church.

His Majesty of Spain, with his courtesans and his courtiers, possibly also with the Queen and her gallants, had gone westward to meet the Portuguese court upon the borders. As a matter of course, therefore, no traveller could hope to leave Madrid, every carriage, cart, horse, mule and ass being embargoed for the royal service. The followers of the father of his people numbered seven thousand, and they advanced, devouring all before them, neither paying nor promising to pay, leaving a broad track behind as bare as that stripped by an army of locusts, with here a weeping cottager, and there a smoking cork-tree for a memorial of their march. Ten days after the king's departure, Mr. Hill and his nephew succeeded in finding a buggy with two mules, and made their escape, taking with them their own larder. Their destination was Lisbon, and as they drew towards the royal party, the risk of embargo added a zest to travel hardly less piquant than that imparted by the neighborhood of bandits. It was mid-January; the mountains shone with snow; but olive-gathering had begun in the plains; violets were in blossom, and in the air was a genial warmth. As they drove south and west, the younger traveller noted for his diary the first appearance of orange-trees, the first myrtle, the first fence of aloes. A pressure was on their spirits till Lisbon should be reached; they would not linger to watch the sad procession attending a body uncovered upon its bier; they left behind the pilgrims to our Lady's Shrine, pious bacchanals half naked and half drunk, advancing to the tune of bagpipe and drum; then the gleam of waters before them, a rough two hours' passage, and the weary heads were on their pillows, to be roused before morning by an earthquake, with its sudden trembling and cracking.

Life at Lisbon was not altogether after Southey's heart. His uncle's books and manuscripts were indeed a treasure to explore, but Mr. Hill lived in society as well as in his study, and thought it right to give his nephew the advantage of new acquaintances. What had the author of *Joan of Arc*, the husband of Edith Southey, the disciple of Rousseau, of Godwin, the Stoic, the tall, dark-eyed young man with a certain wildness of expression in his face, standing alone or discoursing earnestly on Industrial Communities of Women—what had he to do with the *inania regna* of the drawing-room? He cared not for cards nor for dancing; he possessed no gift for turning the leaves on the harpsichord, and saying the happy word at the right moment. Southey, indeed, knew as little as possible of music; and all through his life acted on the principle that the worthiest use of sound without sense had been long ago discovered by schoolboys let loose from their tasks; he loved to create a chaos of sheer noise after those hours during which silence had been interrupted only by the scraping of his pen. For the rest, the sallies of glee from a mountain brook, the piping of a thrush from the orchard-bough, would have delighted him more than all the trills of Sontag, or the finest rapture of Malibran. It was with some of the superiority and seriousness of a philosopher just out of his teens that he unbent to the frivolities of the Lisbon drawing-rooms.

But if Lisbon had its vexations, the country, the climate, the mountains with their streams and coolness, the odorous gardens, Tagus flashing in the sunlight, the rough bar glittering with white breakers, and the Atlantic, made amends. When April came, Mr. Hill moved to his house at Cintra, and the memories and sensations "felt in the blood and felt along the heart," which Southey brought with him to England, were especially associated with this delightful retreat. "Never was a house more completely secluded than my uncle's: it is so surrounded with lemon-trees and laurels as nowhere to be visible at the distance of ten yards. . . . A little stream of water runs down the hill before the door, another door opens into a lemon-garden, and from the sitting-room we have just such a prospect over lemon-trees and laurels to an opposite hill as, by promising a better, invites us to walk. . . . On one of the mountain eminences stands the Penha Convent, visible from the hills near Lisbon. On another are the ruins of a Moorish castle, and a cistern, within its boundaries, kept always full by a spring of purest water that rises in it. From this elevation the eye stretches over a bare and melancholy country to Lisbon on the one side, and on the other to the distant Convent of Mafra, the Atlantic bounding the greater part of the prospect. I never beheld a view that so effectually checked the wish of wandering."

"Lisbon, from which God grant me a speedy deliverance," is the heading of one of Southey's letters; but when the day came to look on Lisbon perhaps for the last time, his heart grew heavy with happy recollection. It was with no regretful feeling, however, that he leaped ashore, glad, after all, to exchange the sparkling Tagus and the lemon groves of Portugal for the mud-encumbered tide of Avon and a glimpse of British smoke. "I intend to write a hymn," he says, "to the Dii Penates." His joy in reunion with his wife was made more rare and tender by finding her in sorrow; the grief was also peculiarly his own—Lovell was dead. He had been taken ill at Salisbury, and by his haste to reach his fireside had heightened the fever which hung upon him. Coleridge, writing to his friend Poole at this time, expresses himself with amiable but inactive piety: "The widow is calm, and amused with her beautiful infant. We are all become more religious than we were. God be ever praised for all things." Southey also writes characteristically: "Poor Lovell! I am in hopes of raising something for his widow by publishing his best pieces, if only enough to buy her a harpsichord. . . . Will you procure me some subscribers?" No idle conceit of serving her; for Mrs. Lovell with her child, as well as Mrs. Coleridge with her children, at a later time became members of the Southey household. Already—though Coleridge might resent it—Southey was willing to part with some vague enthusiasms which wandered in the inane of a young man's fancy, for the sake of simple loyalties and manly tendernesses. No one was more boyish-hearted than Southey at fifty; but even at twenty-two it would not have been surprising to find gray hairs sprinkling the dark. "How does time mellow down our opinions! Little of that ardent enthusiasm which so lately fevered my whole character remains. I have contracted my sphere of action within the little circle of my own friends, and even my wishes seldom stray beyond it. . . . I want a little room to arrange my books in, and some Lares of my own." This domestic feeling was not a besotted contentment in narrow interests; no man was more deeply moved by the political changes in his own country, by the national uprising in the Spanish peninsula, than Southey. While seated at his desk, his intellect ranged through dim centuries of the past. But his heart needed an abiding-place, and he yielded to the bonds—strict and dear—of duty and of love which bound his own life to the lives of others.

The ambitious quarto on which Cottle prided himself not a little was now published (1796). To assign its true place to *Joan of Arc*, we must remember that narrative poetry in the eighteenth century was of the slenderest dimensions and the most modest temper. Poems of description and sentiment seemed to leave no place for poems of action and passion. Delicately finished cabinet pictures, like Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, had superseded fresco.

The only great English epic of that century is the prose Odyssey of which Mr. Tom Jones is the hero. That estimable London merchant, Glover, had indeed written an heroic poem containing the correct number of books; its subject was a lofty one; the sentiments were generous, the language dignified; and inasmuch as Leonidas was a patriot and a Whig, true Whigs and patriots bought and praised the poem. But Glover's poetry lacks the informing breath of life. His second poem, the *Athenaid*, appeared after his death, and its thirty books fell plumb into the water of oblivion. It looked as if the narrative poem *à longue haleine* was dead in English literature. Cowper had given breadth, with a mingled gayety and gravity, to the poetry of description and sentiment; Burns had made the air tremulous with snatches of pure and thrilling song; the *Lyrical Ballads* were not yet. At this moment, from a provincial press, *Joan of Arc* was issued. As a piece of romantic narrative it belongs to the new age of poetry; in sentiment it is revolutionary and republican; its garment of style is of the eighteenth century. Nowhere, except it be in the verses which hail "Inoculation, lovely Maid!" does the personified abstraction, galvanized into life by printer's type and poet's epithet, stalk more at large than in the unfortunate ninth book, the Vision of the Maid, which William Taylor, of Norwich, pronounced worthy of Dante. The critical reviews of the time were liberal in politics, and the poem was praised and bought. "Brissot murdered" was good, and "the blameless wife of Roland" atoned for some offences against taste; there was also that notable reference to the "Almighty people" who "from their tyrant's hand dashed down the iron rod." The delegated maid is a creature overflowing with Rousseauish sensibility; virtue, innocence, the peaceful cot, stand over against the wars and tyranny of kings, and the superstition and cruelty of prelates. Southey himself soon disrelished the youthful heats and violences of the poem; he valued it as the work which first lifted him into public view; and, partly out of a kind of gratitude, he rehandled the *Joan* again and again. It would furnish an instructive lesson to a young writer to note how its asperities were softened, its spasm subdued, its swelling words abated. Yet its chief interest will be perceived only by readers of the earlier text. To the second book Coleridge contributed some four hundred lines, where Platonic philosophy and protests against the Newtonian hypothesis of æther are not very appropriately brought into connection with the shepherd-girl of Domremi. These lines disappeared from all editions after the first.*

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* I find in a catalogue of English Poetry, 1862, the following passage from an autograph letter of S. T. Coleridge, dated Bristol, July 16th, 1814, then in Mr. Pickering's possession: "I looked over the first five books of the first (quarto) edition of *Joan of Arc* yesterday, at Hood's request, in order to mark the lines written by me. I was really astonished—1, at the schoolboy, wretched allegoric machinery; 2, at the transmogrification of the fanatic Virago into a modern Novel-pawing proselyte of the Age of Reason, a Tom Paine in petticoats, but so lovely! and in love more dear!

The neighborhood of Bristol was for the present Southey's home. The quickening of his blood by the beauty, the air and sun, of Southern Europe, the sense of power imparted by his achievement in poetry, the joy of reunion with his young wife, the joy, also, of solitude among rocks and woods, combined to throw him into a vivid and creative mood. His head was full of designs for tragedies, epics, novels, romances, tales—among the rest, "My Oriental poem of The Destruction of the Dom Daniel." He has a "Helicon kind of dropsy" upon him; he had rather leave off eating than poetizing. He was also engaged in making the promised book of travel for Cottle; in what leisure time remained after these employments he scribbled for *The Monthly Magazine*, and to good purpose, for in eight months he had earned no less than "seven pounds and two pair of breeches," which, as he observes to his brother Tom, "is not amiss." He was resolved to be happy, and he was happy. Now, too, the foolish estrangement on Coleridge's part was brought to an end. Southey had been making some acquaintance with German literature at second-hand. He had read Taylor's rendering of Bürger's *Lenore*, and wondered who this William Taylor was; he had read Schiller's *Cabal and Love* in a wretched translation, finding the fifth act dreadfully affecting; he had also read Schiller's *Fiesco*. Coleridge was just back after a visit to Birmingham, but still held off from his brother-in-law and former friend. A sentence of Schiller. copied on a slip of paper by Southey, with a word or two of conciliation, was sent to the offended Abdiel of Pantisocracy: "Fiesco! Fiesco! thou leavest a void in my bosom, which the human race, thrice told, will never fill up." It did not take much to melt the faint resentment of Coleridge, and to open his liberal heart. An interview followed, and in an hour's time, as the story is told by Coleridge's nephew, "these two extraordinary youths were arm in arm again."

Seven pounds and two pair of breeches are not amiss, but pounds take to themselves wings, and fly away: a poet's wealth is commonly in the *paulo-post-futurum* tense; it therefore behooved Southey to proceed with his intended study of the law. By Christmas he would receive the first instalment of an annual allowance of 160*l.* promised by his generous friend Wynn upon coming of age; but Southey, who had just written his *Hymn to the Penates*—a poem of grave tenderness and sober beauty—knew that those deities are exact in their demand for the dues of fire and salt, for the firstlings of fruits, and for offerings of fine flour. A hundred and sixty pounds would not appease them. To London, therefore, he must go, and Blackstone must become his counsellor. But never did Sindbad suffer from the tyrannous old man between his shoulders as Robert Southey suffered from Blackstone.

'*On her rubied cheek hung pity's crystal gem*;' 3, at the utter want of all rhythm in the verse, the monotony and the dead plumb down of the pauses, and of the absence of all bone, muscle, and sinew in the single lines."

London in itself meant deprivation of all that he most cared for; he loved to shape his life in large and simple lines, and London seemed to scribble over his consciousness with distractions and intricacies. "My spirits always sink when I approach it. Green fields are my delight. I am not only better in health, but even in heart, in the country." Some of his father's love of rural sights and sounds was in him, though hare-hunting was not an amusement of Southey the younger; he was as little of a sportsman as his friend Sir Thomas More; the only murderous sport, indeed, which Southey ever engaged in was that of pistol-shooting, with sand for ammunition, at the wasps in Bedford's garden, when he needed a diversion from the wars of Talbot and the "missioned Maid." Two pleasures of a rare kind London offered—the presence of old friends, and the pursuit of old books upon the stalls. But not even for these best lures proposed by the Demon of the place would Southey renounce

> "The genial influences
> And thoughts and feelings to be found where'er
> We breathe beneath the open sky, and see
> Earth's liberal bosom."

To London, however, he would go, and would read nine hours a day at law. Although he pleaded at times against his intended profession, Southey really made a strenuous effort to overcome his repugnance to legal studies, and for a while Blackstone and *Madoc* seemed to advance side by side. But the bent of his nature was strong. "I commit wilful murder on my own intellect," he writes, two years later, "by drudging at law." And the worst or the best of it was that all his drudgery was useless. Southey's memory was of that serviceable, sieve-like kind which retains everything needful to its possessor, and drops everything which is mere encumbrance. Every circumstance in the remotest degree connected with the seminary of magicians in the Dom Daniel under the roots of the sea adhered to his memory, but how to proceed in the Court of Common Pleas was always just forgotten since yesterday. "I am not indolent; I loathe indolence; but, indeed, reading law is laborious indolence—it is thrashing straw. . . . I have given all possible attention, and attempted to command volition; . . . close the book and all was gone." In 1801 there was a chance of Southey's visiting Sicily as secretary to some Italian Legation. "It is unfortunate," he writes to Bedford, "that you cannot come to the sacrifice of one law-book—my whole proper stock—whom I design to take up to the top of Mount Ætna, for the express purpose of throwing him straight to the devil. Huzza, Grosvenor! I was once afraid that I should have a deadly deal of law to forget whenever I had done with it, but my brains, God bless them, never received any, and I am as ignorant as heart could wish. The tares would not grow."

As spring advanced, impatience quickened within him; the craving for a lonely place in sight of something green became too strong. Why might not law be read in Hampshire under blue skies, and also poetry be written? Southey longed to fill his eyesight with the sea, and with sunsets over the sea; he longed to renew that delicious shock of plunging in salt waves which he had last enjoyed in the Atlantic at the foot of the glorious Arrabida mountain. Lodgings were found at Burton, near Christ Church (1797); and here took place a little Southey family-gathering, for his mother joined them, and his brother Tom, the midshipman, just released from a French prison. Here, too, came Cottle, and there were talks about the new volume of shorter poems. Here came Lloyd, the friend of Coleridge, himself a writer of verse; and with Lloyd came Lamb, the play of whose letters show that he found in Southey not only a fellow-lover of quaint books, but also a ready smiler at quips and cranks and twinklings of sly absurdity. And here he found John Rickman, "the sturdiest of jovial companions," whose clear head and stout heart were at Southey's service whenever they were needed through all the future years.

When the holiday at Burton was at an end, Southey had for a time no fixed abode. He is now to be seen roaming over the cliffs by the Avon, and now casting a glance across some book-stall near Gray's Inn. In these and subsequent visits to London he was wistful for home, and eager to hasten back. "At last, my dear Edith, I sit down to write to you in quiet and something like comfort. . . . My morning has been spent pleasantly, for it has been spent alone in the library; the hours so employed pass rapidly enough, but I grow more and more home-sick, like a spoilt child. On the 29th you may expect me. Term opens on the 26th. After eating my third dinner I can drive to the mail, and thirteen shillings will be well bestowed in bringing me home four-and-twenty hours earlier: it is not above sixpence an hour, Edith, and I would gladly purchase an hour at home now at a much higher price."

A visit to Norwich (1798) was pleasant and useful, as widening the circle of his literary friends. Here Southey obtained an introduction to William Taylor, whose translations from the German had previously attracted his notice. Norwich, at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, was a little Academe among provincial cities, where the *belles-lettres* and mutual admiration were assiduously cultivated. Southey saw Norwich at its best. Among its "superior people" were several who really deserved something better than that vague distinction. Chief among them was Dr. Sayers, whom the German critics compared to Gray, who had handled the Norse mythology in poetry, who created the English monodrame, and introduced the rhymeless measures followed by Southey. He rested too soon upon his well-earned reputation, contented himself with touching and retouching his verses; and possessing singularly pleasing manners, abounding information and genial wit, embellished and enjoyed society.*

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* See Southey's article on "Dr. Sayers's Works," *Quarterly Review*, January 1827.

William Taylor, the biographer of Sayers, was a few years his junior. He was versed in Goethe, in Schiller, in the great Kotzebue—Shakespere's immediate successor, in Klopstock, in the fantastic ballad, in the new criticism, and all this at a time when German characters were as undecipherable to most Englishmen as Assyrian arrow-heads. The whirligig of time brought an odd revenge when Carlyle, thirty years later, hailed in Taylor the first example of "the natural-born English Philistine." In Norwich he was known as a model of filial virtue, a rising light of that illuminated city, a man whose extraordinary range pointed him out as the fit and proper person to be interrogated by any blue-stocking lady upon topics as remote as the domestic arrangements of the Chinese Emperor, Chim-Cham-Chow. William Taylor had a command of new and mysterious words: he shone in paradox, and would make ladies aghast by "defences of suicide, avowals that snuff alone had rescued him from it; information, given as certain, that 'God save the King' was sung by Jeremiah in the Temple of Solomon;"* with other blasphemies borrowed from the German, and too startling even for rationalistic Norwich. Dr. Enfield, from whose *Speaker* our fathers learned to recite "My name is Norval," was no longer living; he had just departed in the odor of dilettanteism. But solemn Dr. Alderson was here, and was now engaged in giving away his daughter Amelia to a divorced bridegroom, the painter Opie. Just now Elizabeth Gurney was listening in the Friends' Meeting-House to that discourse which transformed her from a gay haunter of country ball-rooms to the sister and servant of Newgate prisoners. The Martineaus also were of Norwich, and upon subsequent visits the author of *Thalaba* and *Kehama* was scrutinized by the keen eyes of a little girl—not born at the date of his first visit—who smiled somewhat too early and somewhat too maliciously at the airs and affectations of her native town, and whose pleasure in pricking a wind-bag, literary, political, or religious, was only over-exquisite. But Harriet Martineau, who honored courage, purity, faithfulness, and strength wherever they were found, reverenced the Tory Churchman, Robert Southey.†

Soon after his return from Norwich, a small house was taken at Westbury (1797), a village two miles distant from Bristol. During twelve happy months this continued to be Southey's home. "I never before or since," he says in one of the prefaces to his collected poems, "produced so much poetry in the same space of time." William Taylor, by talks about Voss and the German idyls, had set Southey thinking of a series of English Eclogues; Taylor also expressed his wonder that some one of our poets had not undertaken what the French and Germans so long supported—an Almanac of the Muses, or Annual Anthology of minor poems by various writers. The suggestion was well received by Southey, who became editor of such annual volumes for the years 1799 and 1800. At this period were produced many of the ballads and short pieces which are perhaps more generally known than any other of Southey's writings. He had served his apprenticeship to the craft and mystery of such verse-making in the *Morning Post*, earning thereby a guinea a week, but it was not until *Bishop Bruno* was written at Westbury that he had the luck to hit off the right tone, as he conceived it, of the modern ballad. The popularity of his *Mary the Maid of the Inn*, which unhappy children got by heart, and which some one even dramatized, was an affliction to its author, for he would rather have been remembered as a ballad-writer in connection with *Rudiger* and *Lord William*. What he has written in this kind certainly does not move the heart as with a trumpet; it does not bring with it the dim burden of sorrow which is laid upon the spirit by songs like those of Yarrow crooning of "old, unhappy, far-off things." But to tell a tale of fantasy briefly, clearly, brightly, and at the same time with a certain heightening of imaginative touches, is no common achievement. The spectre of the murdered boy in *Lord William* shone upon by a sudden moonbeam, and surrounded by the welter of waves, is more than a picturesque apparition; readers of goodwill may find him a very genuine little ghost, a stern and sad justicer. What has been named "the lyrical cry" is hard to find in any of Southey's shorter poems. In *Roderick* and elsewhere he takes delight in representing great moments of life when fates are decided; but such moments are usually represented as eminences on which will and passion wrestle in a mortal embrace, and if the cry of passion be heard, it is often a half-stifled death cry. The best of Southey's shorter poems, expressing personal feelings, are those which sum up the virtue spread over seasons of life and long habitual moods. Sometimes he is simply sportive, as a serious man released from thought and toil may be, and at such times the sportiveness, while genuine as a schoolboy's, is, like a schoolboy's, the reverse of keen-edged; on other occasions he expresses simply a strong man's endurance of sorrow; but more often an undertone of gravity appears through his glee, and in his sorrow there is something of solemn joy.

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* Harriet Martineau: Autobiography, i. p. 300.

† See her "History of the Peace," Book vi. chap. xvi,

All this year (1799) *Madoc* was steadily advancing, and *The Destruction of the Dom Daniel* had been already sketched in outline. Southey was fortunate in finding an admirable listener. The Pneumatic Institution, established in Bristol by Dr. Beddoes, was now under the care of a youth lately an apothecary's apprentice at Penzance, a poet, but still more a philosopher, "a miraculous young man." "He is not yet twenty-one, nor has he applied to chemistry more than eighteen months, but he has advanced with such seven-leagued strides as to overtake everybody. His name is Davy"—Humphry Davy—"the young chemist, the young everything, the man least ostentatious, of first talent that I have ever known." Southey would walk across from Westbury, an easy walk over beautiful ground, to breathe Davy's wonder-working gas, "which excites all possible mental and muscular energy, and induces almost a delirium of pleasurable sensations without any subsequent dejection." Pleased to find scientific proof that he possessed a poet's fine susceptibility, he records that the nitrous oxide wrought upon him more readily than upon any other of its votaries. "Oh, Tom!" he exclaims, gasping and ebullient—"oh, Tom! such a gas has Davy discovered, the gaseous oxide! . . . Davy has actually invented a new pleasure for which language has no name. I am going for more this evening; it makes one strong, and so happy! so gloriously happy! . . . Oh, excellent air-bag!" If Southey drew inspiration from Davy's air-bag, could Davy do less than lend his ear to Southey's epic? They would stroll back to Martin Hall—so christened because the birds who love delicate air built under its eaves their "pendent beds"—and in the large sitting-room, its recesses stored with books, or seated near the currant-bushes in the garden, the tenant of Martin Hall would read aloud of Urien and Madoc and Cadwallon. When Davy had said good-by, Southey would sit long in the window open to the west, poring on the fading glories of sunset, while about him the dew was cool, and the swallows' tiny shrieks of glee grew less frequent, until all was hushed and another day was done. And sometimes he would muse how all things that he needed for utter happiness were here—all things—and then would rise an ardent desire—except a child.

Martin Hall was unhappily held on no long lease; its owner now required possession, and the Southeys, with their household gods, had reluctantly to bid it farewell. Another trouble, and a more formidable one, at the same time threatened. What with Annual Anthologies, Madoc in Wales, Madoc in Aztlan, the design for a great poem on the Deluge, for a Greek drama, for a Portuguese tragedy, for a martyrdom play of the reign of Queen Mary—what with reading Spanish, learning Dutch, translating and reviewing for the booksellers—Southey had been too closely at work. His heart began to take fits of sudden and violent pulsation; his sleep, ordinarily as sound as a child's, became broken and unrefreshing. Unless the disease were thrown off by regular exercise, Beddoes assured him, it would fasten upon him, and could not be overcome. Two years previously they had spent a summer at Burton, in Hampshire; why should they not go there again? In June, 1799, unaccompanied by his wife, whose health seemed also to be impaired, Southey went to seek a house. Two cottages, convertible into one, with a garden, a fish-pond, and a pigeon-house, promised a term of quiet and comfort in "Southey Palace that is to be." Possession was not to be had until Michaelmas, and part of the intervening time was very enjoyably spent in roaming among the vales and woods, the coombes and cliffs of Devon. It was in some measure a renewal of the open-air delight which had been his at the Arrabida and Cintra. "I have seen the Valley of Stones," he writes: "Imagine a narrow vale between two ridges of hills somewhat steep; the southern hill turfed; the vale which runs from east to west covered with huge stones and fragments of stones among the fern that fills it; the northern ridge completely bare, excoriated of all turf and all soil, the very bones and skeleton of the earth; rock reclining upon rock, stone piled upon stone, a huge and terrific mass. A palace of the Preadamite kings, a city of the Anakim, must have appeared so shapeless and yet so like the ruins of what had been shaped, after the waters of the flood subsided. I ascended with some toil the highest point; two large stones inclining on each other formed a rude portal on the summit: here I sat down; a little level platform about two yards long lay before me, and then the eye fell immediately upon the sea, far, very far below. I never felt the sublimity of solitude before."

But Southey could not rest. "I had rather leave off eating than poetizing," he had said; and now the words seemed coming true, for he still poetized, and had almost ceased to eat. "Yesterday I finished *Madoc*, thank God! and thoroughly to my own satisfaction; but I have resolved on one great, laborious, and radical alteration. It was my design to identify Madoc with Mango Capac, the legislator of Peru: in this I have totally failed; therefore Mango Capac is to be the hero of another poem." There is something charming in the logic of Southey's "therefore;" so excellent an epic hero must not go to waste; but when, on the following morning, he rose early, it was to put on paper the first hundred lines, not of Mango Capac, but of the Dom Daniel poem which we know as *Thalaba*. A *Mohammed*, to be written in hexameters, was also on the stocks; and Coleridge had promised the half of this. Southey, who remembered a certain quarto volume on Pantisocracy and other great unwritten works, including the last—a Life of Lessing, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge—knew the worth of his collaborateur's promises. However, it matters little; "the only inconvenience that his dereliction can occasion will be that I shall write the poem in fragments, and have to seam them together at last." "My Mohammed will be what I believe the Arabian was in the beginning of his career—sincere in enthusiasm; and it would puzzle a casuist to distinguish between the belief of inspiration and actual enthusiasm." A short fragment of the *Mohammed* was actually written by Coleridge, and a short fragment by Southey, which, dating from 1799, have an interest in connection with the history of the English hexameter. Last among these many projects, Southey has made up his mind to undertake one great historical work—the History of Portugal. This was no dream-project; Mango Capac never descended from his father the Sun to appear in Southey's poem; Mohammed never emerged from the cavern where the spider had spread his net; but the work which was meant to rival Gibbon's great history was in part achieved. It is a fact more pathetic than many others which make appeal for tears, that this most ambitious and most cherished design of Southey's life, conceived at the age of twenty-six, and kept constantly in view through all his days of toil, was not yet half wrought out when, forty years later, the pen dropped from his hand, and the worn-out brain could think no more.

The deal shavings had hardly been cleared out of the twin cottages at Burton, when Southey was prostrated by a nervous fever; on recovering, he moved to Bristol, still weak, with strange pains about the heart, and sudden seizures of the head. An entire change of scene was obviously desirable. The sound of the brook that ran beside his uncle's door at Cintra, the scent of the lemon-groves, the grandeur of the Arrabida, haunted his memory; there were books and manuscripts to be found in Portugal which were essential in the preparation of his great history of that country. Mr. Hill invited him; his good friend Elmsley, an old schoolfellow, offered him a hundred pounds. From every point of view it seemed right and prudent to go. Ailing and unsettled as he was, he yet found strength and time to put his hand to a good work before leaving Bristol. Chatterton always interested Southey deeply; they had this much at least in common, that both had often listened to the chimes of St. Mary Redcliffe, that both were lovers of antiquity, both were rich in store of verse, and lacked all other riches. Chatterton's sister, Mrs. Newton, and her child were needy and neglected. It occurred to Southey and Cottle that an edition of her brother's poems might be published for her benefit. Subscribers came in slowly, and the plan underwent some alterations; but in the end the charitable thought bore fruit, and the sister and niece of the great unhappy boy were lifted into security and comfort. To have done something to appease the moody and indignant spirit of a dead poet, was well; to have rescued from want a poor woman and her daughter, was perhaps even better.

Early in April, 1800, Southey was once more on his way from Bristol, by Falmouth, to the Continent, accompanied by his wife, now about to be welcomed to Portugal by the fatherly uncle whose prudence she had once alarmed. The wind was adverse, and while the travellers were detained Southey strolled along the beach, caught soldier-crabs, and observed those sea-anemones which blossom anew in the verse of *Thalaba*. For reading on the voyage, he had brought Burns, Coleridge's poems, the Lyrical Ballads, and a poem, with "miraculous beauties," called *Gebir*, "written by God knows who." But when the ship lost sight of England, Southey, with swimming head, had little spirit left for wrestling with the intractable thews of Landor's early verse; he could just grunt out some crooked pun or quaint phrase in answer to inquiries as to how he did. Suddenly, on the fourth morning, came the announcement that a French cutter was bearing down upon them. Southey leaped to his feet, hurriedly removed his wife to a place of safety, and, musket in hand, took his post upon the quarter-deck. The smoke from the enemy's matches could be seen. She was hailed, answered in broken English, and passed on. A moment more, and the suspense was over; she was

English, manned from Guernsey. "You will easily imagine," says Southey, "that my sensations at the ending of the business were very definable—one honest, simple joy that I was in a whole skin!" Two mornings more, and the sun rose behind the Berlings; the heights of Cintra became visible, and nearer, the silver dust of the breakers, with sea-gulls sporting over them; a pilot's boat, with puffed and flapping sail, ran out; they passed thankfully our Lady of the Guide, and soon dropped anchor in the Tagus. An absence of four years had freshened every object to Southey's sense of seeing, and now he had the joy of viewing all familiar things as strange through so dear a companion's eyes.

Mr. Hill was presently on board with kindly greeting; he had hired a tiny house for them, perched well above the river, its little rooms cool with many doors and windows. Manuel the barber, brisk as Figaro, would be their factotum, and Mrs. Southey could also see a new maid—Maria Rosa. Maria by-and-by came to be looked at, in powder, straw-colored gloves, fan, pink-ribands, muslin petticoat, green satin sleeves; she was "not one of the folk who sleep on straw mattresses;" withal she was young and clean. Mrs. Southey, who had liked little the prospect of being thrown abroad upon the world, was beginning to be reconciled to Portugal; roses and oranges and green peas in early May were pleasant things. Then the streets were an unending spectacle; now a negro going by with Christ in a glass case, to be kissed for a petty alms; now some picturesque, venerable beggar; now the little Emperor of the Holy Ghost, strutting it from Easter till Whitsuntide, a six-year-old manikin with silk stockings, buckles, cocked hat, and sword, his gentlemen ushers attending, and his servants receiving donations on silver salvers. News of an assassination, from time to time, did not much disturb the tranquil tenor of ordinary life. There were old gardens to loiter in along vine-trellised walks, or in sunshine where the gray lizards glanced and gleamed. And eastward from the city were lovely by-lanes amid blossoming olive-trees or market-gardens, veined by tiny aqueducts and musical with the creak of water-wheels, which told of cool refreshment. There was also the vast public aqueduct to visit; Edith Southey, holding her husband's hand, looked down, hardly discovering the diminished figures below of women washing in the brook of Alcantara. If the sultry noon in Lisbon was hard to endure, evening made amends; then strong sea-winds swept the narrowest alley, and rolled their current down every avenue. And later, it was pure content to look down upon the moonlighted river, with Almada stretching its black isthmus into the waters that shone like midnight snow.

Before moving to Cintra, they wished to witness the procession of the Body of God—Southey likes the English words as exposing "the naked nonsense of the blasphemy"—those of St. Anthony, and the Heart of Jesus, and the first bull-fight. Everything had grown into one insufferable glare; the very dust was bleached; the light was like the quivering of a furnace fire. Every man and beast was asleep; the stone-cutter slept with his head upon the stone; the dog slept under the very cart-wheels; the bells alone slept not, nor ceased from their importunate clamor. At length—it was near mid-June—a marvellous cleaning of streets took place, the houses were hung with crimson damask, soldiers came and lined the ways, windows and balconies filled with impatient watchers—not a jewel in Lisbon but was on show. With blare of music the procession began: first, the banners of the city and its trades, the clumsy bearers crab-sidling along; an armed champion carrying a flag; wooden St. George held painfully on horseback; led horses, their saddles covered with rich escutcheons; all the brotherhoods, an immense train of men in red or gray cloaks; the knights of the orders superbly dressed; the whole patriarchal church in glorious robes; and then, amid a shower of rose-leaves fluttering from the windows, the Pix, and after the Pix, the Prince. On a broiling Sunday, the amusement being cool and devout, was celebrated the bull-feast. The first wound sickened Edith; Southey himself, not without an effort, looked on and saw "the death-sweat darkening the dun hide"—a circumstance borne in mind for his *Thalaba*. "I am not quite sure," he writes, "that my curiosity in once going was perfectly justifiable, but the pain inflicted by the sight was expiation enough."

After this it was high time to take refuge from the sun among the lemon-groves at Cintra. Here, if ever in his life, Southey for a brief season believed that the grasshopper is wiser than the ant; a true Portuguese indolence overpowered him. "I have spent my mornings half naked in a wet room dozing upon the bed, my right hand not daring to touch my left." Such glorious indolence could only be a brief possession with Southey. More often he would wander by the streams to those spots where purple crocuses carpeted the ground, and there rest and read. Sometimes seated sideways on one of the sure-footed *burros*, with a boy to beat and guide the brute, he would jog lazily on, while Edith, now skilled in "ass-womanship," would jog along on a brother donkey. Once and again a fog—not unwelcome—came rolling in from the ocean, one huge mass of mist, marching through the valley like a victorious army, approaching, blotting the brightness, but leaving all dank and fresh. And always the evenings were delightful, when fireflies sparkled under the trees, or in July and August, as their light went out, when the grillo began his song. "I eat oranges, figs, and delicious pears—drink Colares wine, a sort of half-way excellence between port and claret—read all I can lay my hands on—dream of poem after poem, and play after play—take a siesta of two hours, and am as happy as if life were but one everlasting to-day, and that to-morrow was not to be provided for."

But Southey's second visit to Portugal was, on the whole, no season of repose. A week in the southern climate seemed to have restored him to health, and he assailed folio after folio in his uncle's library, rising each morning at five, "to lay in bricks for the great Pyramid of my history." The chronicles, the laws, the poetry of Portugal, were among these bricks. Nor did he slacken in his ardor as a writer of verse. Six books of *Thalaba* were in his trunk in manuscript when he sailed from Falmouth; the remaining six were of a southern birth. "I am busy," he says, "in correcting *Thalaba* for the press. . . . It is a good job done, and so I have thought of another, and another, and another." As with *Joan of Arc*, so with this maturer poem, the correction was a rehandling which doubled the writer's work. To draw the pen across six hundred lines did not cost him a pang. At length the manuscript was despatched to his friend Rickman, with instructions to make as good a bargain as he could for the first thousand copies. By *Joan* and the miscellaneous *Poems* of 1797, Southey had gained not far from a hundred and fifty pounds; he might fairly expect a hundred guineas for *Thalaba*. It would buy the furniture of his long-expected house. But he was concerned about the prospects of Harry, his younger brother; and now William Taylor wrote that some provincial surgeon of eminence would board and instruct the lad during four or five years for precisely a hundred guineas. "A hundred guineas!" Southey exclaims; "well, but, thank God, there is *Thalaba* ready, for which I ask this sum." "*Thalaba* finished, all my poetry," he writes, "instead of being wasted in rivulets and ditches, shall flow into the great Madoc Mississippi river. One epic poem, however, he finds too little to content him; already *The Curse of Kehama* is in his head, and another of the mythological series which never saw the light. "I have some distant view of manufacturing a Hindoo romance, wild as *Thalaba*; and a nearer one of a Persian story, of which I see the germ of vitality. I take the system of the Zendavesta for my mythology, and introduce the powers of darkness persecuting a Persian, one of the hundred and fifty sons of the great king; an Athenian captive is a prominent character, and the whole warfare of the evil power ends in exalting a Persian prince into a citizen of Athens." From which catastrophe we may infer that Southey had still something republican about his heart.

Before quitting Portugal, the Southeys, with their friend Waterhouse and a party of ladies, travelled northwards, encountering very gallantly the trials of the way; Mafra, its convent and library, had been already visited by Southey. "Do you love reading?" asked the friar who accompanied them, overhearing some remark about the books. "Yes." "And I," said the honest Franciscan, "love eating and drinking." At Coimbra—that central point from which radiates the history and literature of Portugal—Southey would have agreed feelingly with the good brother of the Mafra convent; he had looked forward to precious moments of emotion in that venerable city; but air and exercise had given him a cruel appetite; if truth must be told, the ducks of the monastic poultry-yard were more to him than the precious finger of St. Anthony. "I *did* long," he confesses, "to buy, beg, or steal a dinner."

The dinner must somehow have been secured before he could approach in a worthy spirit that most affecting monument at Coimbra—the Fountain of Tears. "It is the spot where Inez de Castro was accustomed to meet her husband Pedro, and weep for him in his absence. Certainly her dwelling-house was in the adjoining garden; and from there she was dragged, to be murdered at the feet of the king, her father-in-law. . . . I, who have long planned a tragedy upon the subject, stood upon my own scene." While Southey and his companions gazed at the fountains and their shadowing cedar-trees, the gownsmen gathered round; the visitors were travel-stained and bronzed by the sun; perhaps the witty youths cheered for the lady with the squaw tint; whatever offence may have been given, the ladies' protectors found them "impudent blackguards," and with difficulty suppressed pugilistic risings.

After an excursion southwards to Algarve, Southey made ready for his return to England (1801). His wife desired it, and he had attained the main objects of his sojourn abroad. His health had never been more perfect, he had read widely; he had gathered large material for his History; he knew where to put his hand on this or that which might prove needful, whenever he should return to complete his work among the libraries of Portugal. On arriving at Bristol, a letter from Coleridge met him. It was dated from Greta Hall, Keswick; and after reminding Southey that Bristol had recently lost the miraculous young man, Davy, and adding that he, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, had experiences, sufferings, hopes, projects to impart, which would beguile much time, "were you on a desert island and I your *Friday*," it went on to present the attractions of Keswick, and in particular of Greta Hall, in a way which could not be resisted. Taking all in all—the beauty of the prospect, the roominess of the house, the lowness of the rent, the unparalleled merits of the landlord, the neighborhood of noble libraries—it united advantages not to be found together elsewhere. "In short"—the appeal wound up—"for situation and convenience—and when I mention the name of Wordsworth, for society of men of intellect—I know no place in which you and Edith would find yourselves so well suited."

Meanwhile Drummond, an M.P. and a translator of Persius, who was going as ambassador, first to Palermo and then to Constantinople, was on the look-out for a secretary. The post would be obtained for Southey by his friend Wynn, if possible; this might lead to a consulship: why not to the consulship at Lisbon, with 1000*l*. a year? Such possibilities, however, could not prevent him from speedily visiting Coleridge and Keswick. "Time and absence make strange work with our affections," so writes Southey; "but mine are ever returning to rest upon you. I have other and dear friends, but none with whom the whole of my being is intimate. . . . Oh! I have yet such dreams Is it quite clear that you and I were not meant for some better star, and dropped by mistake into this world of pounds, shillings, and pence?" So for the first time Southey set foot in Keswick, and looked upon the lake and the hills which were to become a portion of his being, and which have taken him so closely, so tenderly, to themselves. His first feeling was one not precisely of disappointment, but certainly of remoteness from this northern landscape; he had not yet come out from the glow and the noble *abandon* of the South. "These lakes," he says, "are like rivers; but oh for the Mondego and the Tagus! And these mountains, beautifully indeed are they shaped and grouped; but oh for the grand Monchique! and for Cintra, my paradise!"

Time alone was needed to calm and temper his sense of seeing; for when, leaving Mrs. Southey with her sister and Coleridge, he visited his friend Wynn at Llangedwin, and breathed the mountain air of his own Prince Madoc, all the loveliness of Welsh streams and rivers sank into his soul. "The Dee is broad and shallow, and its dark waters shiver into white and silver and hues of amber brown. No mud upon the shore—no bushes—no marsh plants—anywhere a child might stand dry-footed and dip his hand into the water." And again a contrasted picture: "The mountain-side was stony, and a few trees grew among its stones; the other side was more wooded, and had grass on the top, and a huge waterfall thundered into the bottom, and thundered down the bottom. When it had nearly passed these rocky straits, it met another stream. The width of water then became considerable, and twice it formed a large black pool, to the eye absolutely stagnant, the froth of the waters that entered there sleeping upon the surface; it had the deadness of enchantment; yet was not the pool wider than the river above it and below it, where it foamed over and fell." Such free delight as Southey had among the hills of Wales came quickly to an end. A letter was received offering him the position of private secretary to Mr. Corry, Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland, with a salary of four hundred pounds a year. Rickman was in Dublin, and this was Rickman's doing. Southey, as he was in prudence bound to do, accepted the appointment, hastened back to Keswick, bade farewell for a little while to his wife, and started for Dublin in no cheerful frame of mind.

At a later time, Southey possessed Irish friends whom he honored and loved; he has written wise and humane words about the Irish people. But all through his career Ireland was to Southey somewhat too much that ideal country—of late to be found only in the region of humorous-pathetic melodrama—in which the business of life is carried on mainly by the agency of bulls and blunderbusses; and it required a distinct effort on his part to conceive the average Teague or Patrick otherwise than as a potato-devouring troglodyte, on occasions grotesquely amiable, but more often with the rage of Popery working in his misproportioned features. Those hours during which Southey waited for the packet were among the heaviest of his existence. After weary tackings in a baffling wind, the ship was caught into a gale, and was whirled away, fifteen miles north of Dublin, to the fishing town of Balbriggan. Then, a drive across desolate country, which would have depressed the spirits had it not been enlivened by the airs and humors of little Dr. Solomon, the unique, the omniscient, the garrulous, next after Bonaparte the most illustrious of mortals, inventor of the Cordial Balm of Gilead, and possessor of a hundred puncheons of rum. When the new private secretary arrived, the chancellor was absent; the secretary, therefore, set to work on rebuilding a portion of his *Madoc.* Presently Mr. Corry appeared, and there was a bow and a shake of hands; then he hurried away to London, to be followed by Southey, who, going round by Keswick, was there joined by his wife. From London Southey writes to Rickman: "The chancellor and the scribe go on in the same way. The scribe hath made out a catalogue of all books published since the commencement of '97 upon finance and scarcity; he hath also copied a paper written by J. R. [John Rickman] containing some Irish alderman's hints about oak-bark; and nothing more hath the scribe done in his vocation. Duly he calls at the chancellor's door; sometimes he is admitted to immediate audience; sometimes kicketh his heels in the antechamber; . . . sometimes a gracious message emancipates him for the day. Secrecy hath been enjoined him as to these State proceedings. On three subjects he is directed to read and research—corn-laws, finance, tithes, according to their written order." The independent journals meanwhile had compared Corry and Southey, the two State conspirators, to Empson and Dudley; and delicately expressed a hope that the poet would make no false *numbers* in his new work.

Southey, who had already worn an ass's head in one of Gillray's caricatures, was not afflicted by the newspaper sarcasm; but the vacuity of such a life was intolerable; and when it was proposed that he should become tutor to Corry's son, he brought his mind finally to the point of resigning "a foolish office and a good salary." His notions of competence were moderate; the vagabondage between the Irish and English headquarters entailed by his office was irksome. His books were accumulating, and there was ample work to be done among them if he had but a quiet library of his own. Then, too, there was another good reason for resigning. A new future was opening for Southey. Early in the year (1802) his mother died. She had come to London to be with her son; there she had been stricken with mortal illness; true to her happy, self-forgetful instincts, she remained calm, uncomplaining, considerate for others. "Go down, my dear; I shall sleep presently," she had said, knowing that death was at hand. With his mother, the last friend of Southey's infancy and childhood was gone. "I calmed and curbed myself," he writes, "and forced myself to employment; but at night there was no sound of feet in her bedroom, to which I had been used to listen, and in the morning it was not my first business to see her." The past was past indeed. But as the year opened, it brought a happy promise; before summer would end, a child might be in his arms. Here were sufficient reasons for his resignation; a library and a nursery ought, he says, to be stationary.

To Bristol husband and wife came, and there found a small furnished house. After the roar of Fleet Street, and the gathering of distinguished men—Fuseli, Flaxman, Barry, Lamb, Campbell, Bowles—there was a strangeness in the great quiet of the place. But in that quiet Southey could observe each day the growth of the pile of manuscript containing his version of *Amadis of Gaul*, for which Longman and Rees promised him a munificent sixty pounds. He toiled at his *History of Portugal*, finding matter of special interest in that part which was concerned with the religious orders. He received from his Lisbon collection precious boxes folio-crammed. "My dear and noble books! Such folios of saints! dull books enough for my patience to diet upon, till all my flock be gathered together into one fold." Sixteen volumes of Spanish poetry are lying uncut in the next room; a folio yet untasted jogs his elbow; two of the best and rarest chronicles coyly invite him He had books enough in England to employ three years of active industry. And underlying all thoughts of the great Constable Nuño Alvares Pereyra, of the King D. Joao I., and of the Cid, deeper than the sportsman pleasure of hunting from their lair strange facts about the orders Cistercian, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit, there was a thought of that new-comer whom, says Southey, "I already feel disposed to call whelp and dog, and all those vocables of vituperation by which a man loves to call those he loves best."

In September, 1802, was born Southey's first child, named Margaret Edith, after her mother and her dead grandmother; a flat-nosed, round-foreheaded, gray eyed, good-humored girl. "I call Margaret," he says, in a sober mood of fatherly happiness, "by way of avoiding all commonplace phraseology of endearment, a worthy child and a most excellent character. She loves me better than any one except her mother; her eyes are as quick as thought; she is all life and spirit, and as happy as the day is long; but that little brain of hers is never at rest, and it is painful to see how dreams disturb her." For Margery and her mother and the folios a habitation must be found. Southey inclined now towards settling in the neighborhood of London—now towards Norwich, where Dr. Sayers and William Taylor would welcome him—now towards Keswick; but its horrid latitude, its incessant rains! On the whole, his heart turned most fondly to Wales; and there, in one of the loveliest spots of Great Britain, in the vale of Neath, was a house to let, by name Maes Gwyn. Southey gave his fancy the rein, and pictured himself "housed and homed" in Maes Gwyn, working steadily at the *History of Portugal*, and now and again glancing away from his work to have a look at Margery seated in her little great chair. But it was never to be; a difference with the landlord brought to an end his treaty for the house, and in August the child lay dying. It was bitter to part with what had been so long desired—during seven childless years—and what had grown so dear.

But Southey's heart was strong; he drew himself together, returned to his toil, now less joyous than before, and set himself to strengthen and console his wife.

Bristol was henceforth a place of mournful memories. "Edith," writes Southey, "will be nowhere so well as with her sister Coleridge. She has a little girl some six months old, and I shall try and graft her into the wound while it is yet fresh." Thus Greta Hall received its guests (September, 1803). At first the sight of little Sara Coleridge and her baby cooings caused shootings of pain on which Southey had not counted. Was the experiment of this removal to prove a failure? He still felt as if he were a feather driven by the wind. "I have no symptoms of root-striking here," he said. But he spoke, not knowing what was before him; the years of wandering were indeed over; here he had found his home.

CHAPTER IV.

WAYS OF LIFE AT KESWICK, 1803—1839.

THE best of life with Southey was yet to come; but in what remains there are few outstanding events to chronicle; there is nowhere any splendor of circumstance. Of some lives the virtue is distilled, as it were, into a few exquisite moments—moments of rapture, of vision, of sudden and shining achievement; all the days and years seem to exist only for the sake of such faultless moments, and it matters little whether such a life, of whose very essence it is to break the bounds of time and space, be long or short as measured by the falling of sand-grains or the creeping of a shadow. Southey's life was not one of these; its excellence was constant, uniform, perhaps somewhat too evenly distributed. He wrought in his place day after day, season after season. He submitted to the good laws of use and wont. He grew stronger, calmer, more full-fraught with stores of knowledge, richer in treasure of the heart. Time laid its hand upon him gently and unfalteringly; the bounding step became less light and swift; the ringing voice lapsed into sadder fits of silence; the raven hair changed to a snowy white; only still the indefatigable eye ran down the long folio columns, and the indefatigable hand still held the pen—until all true life had ceased. When it has been said that Southey was appointed Pye's successor in the laureateship, that he received an honorary degree from his university, that now and again he visited the Continent, that children were born to him from among whom death made choice of the dearest; and when we add that he wrote and published books, the leading facts of Southey's life have been told. Had he been a worse or a weaker man, we might look to find mysteries, picturesque vices, or engaging follies; as it is, everything is plain, straightforward, substantial What makes the life of Southey eminent and singular is its unity of purpose, its persistent devotion to a chosen object, its simplicity, purity, loyalty, fortitude, kindliness, truth.

The river Greta, before passing under the bridge at the end of Main Street, Keswick, winds about the little hill on which stands Greta Hall; its murmur may be heard when all is still beyond the garden and orchard; to the west it catches the evening light. "In front," Coleridge wrote when first inviting his friend to settle with him, "we have a giants' camp—an encamped army of tent-like mountains, which by an inverted arch gives a view of another vale. On our right the lovely vale and the wedge-shaped lake of Bassenthwaite; and on our left Derwentwater and Lodore full in view, and the fantastic mountains of Borrowdale. Behind us the massy Skiddaw, smooth, green, high, with two chasms and a tent-like ridge in the larger. Southey's house belongs in a peculiar degree to his life: in it were stored the treasures upon which his intellect drew for sustenance; in it his affections found their earthly abiding-place; all the most mirthful, all the most mournful, recollections of Southey hang about it; to it in every little wandering his heart reverted like an exile's; it was at once his workshop and his playground; and for a time, while he endured a living death, it became his antechamber to the tomb. The rambling tenement consisted of two houses under one roof, the larger part being occupied by the Coleridges and Southeys, the smaller for a time by Mr. Jackson, their landlord. On the ground-floor was the parlor which served as dining-room and general sitting-room, a pleasant chamber looking upon the green in front; here also were Aunt Lovell's sitting-room, and the mangling-room, in which stood ranged in a row the long array of clogs, from the greatest even unto the least, figuring in a symbol the various stages of human life. The stairs to the right of the kitchen led to a landing-place filled with bookcases; a few steps more led to the little bedroom occupied by Mrs. Coleridge and her daughter. "A few steps farther," writes Sarah Coleridge, whose description is here given in abridgment, "was a little wing bedroom—then the study, where my uncle sat all day occupied with literary labors and researches, but which was used as a drawing-room for company. Here all the tea-visiting guests were received. The room had three windows, a large one looking down upon the green with the wide flower-border, and over to Keswick Lake and mountains beyond. There were two smaller windows looking towards the lower part of the town seen beyond the nursery-garden. The room was lined with books in fine bindings; there were books also in brackets, elegantly lettered vellum-covered volumes lying on their sides in a heap. The walls were hung with pictures, mostly portraits. . . . At the back of the room was a comfortable sofa, and there were sundry tables, beside my uncle's library table, his screen, desk, etc.

Altogether, with its internal fittings up, its noble outlook, and something pleasing in its proportions, this was a charming room." Hard by the study was Southey's bedroom. We need not ramble farther through passages lined with books, and up and down flights of stairs to Mr. Jackson's organ-room, and Mrs. Lovell's room, and Hartley's parlor, and the nurseries, and the dark apple-room supposed to be the abode of a bogle. Without, greensward, flowers, shrubs, strawberry-beds, fruit-trees, encircled the house; to the back, beyond the orchard, a little wood stretched down to the river-side. A rough path ran along the bottom of the wood; here, on a covered seat, Southey often read or planned future work, and here his little niece loved to play in sight of the dimpling water. "Dear Greta Hall!" she exclaims; "and oh, that rough path beside the Greta! How much of my childhood, of my girlhood, of my youth, were spent there!"

Southey's attachment to his mountain town and its lakes was of no sudden growth. He came to them as one not born under their influence; that power of hills to which Wordsworth owed fealty, had not brooded upon Southey during boyhood; the rich southern meadows, the wooded cliffs of Avon, the breezy downs, had nurtured his imagination, and to these he was still bound by pieties of the heart. In the churchyard at Ashton, where lay his father and his kinsfolk, the beneficent cloud of mingled love and sorrow most overshadowed his spirit. His imagination did not soar, as did Wordsworth's, in naked solitudes; he did not commune with a Presence immanent in external nature: the world, as he viewed it, was an admirable habitation for mankind—a habitation with a history. Even after he had grown a mountaineer, he loved a humanized landscape, one in which the gains of man's courage, toil, and endurance are apparent. Flanders, where the spade has wrought its miracles of diligence, where the slow canal-boat glides, where the *carillons* ripple from old spires, where sturdy burghers fought for freedom, and where vellum-bound quartos might be sought and found, Flanders, on the whole, gave Southey deeper and stronger feelings than did Switzerland. The ideal land of his dreams was always Spain; the earthly paradise for him was Cintra, with its glory of sun, and a glow even in its depths of shadow. But as the years went by, Spain became more and more a memory, less and less a hope; and the realities of life in his home were of more worth every day. When, in 1807, it grew clear that Greta Hall was to be his life-long place of abode, Southey's heart closed upon it with a tenacious grasp. He set the plasterer and carpenter to work; he planted shrubs; he enclosed the garden; he gathered his books about him, and thought that here were materials for the industry of many years; he held in his arms children who were born in this new home; and he looked to Crosthwaite Churchyard, expecting, with quiet satisfaction, that when toil was ended he should there take his rest.

"I don't talk much about these things," Southey writes; "but these lakes and mountains give me a deep joy for which I suspect nothing elsewhere can compensate, and this is a feeling which time strengthens instead of weakening." Some of the delights of southern counties he missed; his earliest and deepest recollections were connected with flowers; both flowers and fruits were now too few; there was not a cowslip to be found near Keswick. "Here in Cumberland I miss the nightingale and the violet—the most delightful bird and the sweetest flower." But for such losses there were compensations. A pastoral land will give amiable pledges for the seasons and the months, and will perform its engagements with a punctual observance; to this the mountains hardly condescend, but they shower at their will a sudden largess of unimagined beauty. Southey would sally out for a constitutional at his three-mile pace, the peaked cap slightly shadowing his eyes, which were coursing over the pages of a book held open as he walked; he had left his study to obtain exercise, and so to preserve health; he was not a laker engaged in view-hunting; he did not affect the contemplative mood which at the time was not and could not be his. But when he raised his eyes, or when, quickening his three-mile to a four-mile pace, he closed the book, the beauty which lay around him liberated and soothed his spirit. This it did unfailingly; and it might do more, for incalculable splendors, visionary glories, exaltations, terrors, are momentarily possible where mountain, and cloud, and wind, and sunshine meet. Southey, as he says, did not talk much of these things, but they made life for him immeasurably better than it would have been in city confinement; there were spaces, vistas, an atmosphere around his sphere of work which lightened and relieved it. The engagements in his study were always so numerous and so full of interest that it needed an effort to leave the table piled with books and papers. But a May morning would draw him forth into the sun in spite of himself. Once abroad, Southey had a vigorous joy in the quickened blood, and the muscles impatient with energy long pent up. The streams were his especial delight; he never tired of their deep retirement, their shy loveliness, and their melody; they could often beguile him into an hour of idle meditation; their beauty has in an especial degree passed into his verse. When his sailor brother Thomas came and settled in the Vale of Newlands, Southey would quickly cover the ground from Keswick at his four-mile pace, and in the beck at the bottom of Tom's fields, on summer days, he would plunge and re-plunge and act the river-god in the natural seats of mossy stone. Or he would be overpowered some autumn morning by the clamor of childish voices voting a holiday by acclamation. Their father must accompany them; it would do him good, they knew it would; they knew he did not take sufficient exercise, for they had heard him say so. Where should the scramble be? To Skiddaw Dod, or Causey Pike, or Watenlath, or, as a compromise between their exuberant activity and his inclination for the chair and the fireside, to Walla Crag? And there, while his young companions opened their baskets and took their noonday meal, Southey would seat himself—as Westall has drawn him—upon the bough of an ash-tree, the water flowing smooth and green at his feet, but a little higher up broken, flashing, and whitening in its fall; and there in the still autumn noon he would muse happily, placidly, not now remembering with over-keen desire the gurgling tanks and fountains of Cintra, his Paradise of early manhood.*

On summer days, when the visits of friends, or strangers bearing letters of introduction, compelled him to idleness, Southey's more ambitious excursions were taken. But he was well aware that those who form acquaintance with a mountain region during a summer all blue and gold, know little of its finer power. It is October that brings most often those days faultless, pearl-pure, of affecting influence,

"In the long year set
Like captain jewels in the carcanet."

Then, as Wordsworth has said, the atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the coloring is richer and more finely harmonized; and, in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments. Even December is a better month than July for perceiving the special greatness of a mountainous country. When the snow lies on the fells soft and smooth, Grisedale Pike and Skiddaw drink in tints at morning and evening marvellous as those seen upon Mont Blanc or the Jungfrau for purity and richness.

"Summer," writes Southey, "is not the season for this country. Coleridge says, and says well, that then it is like a theatre at noon. There are no *goings on* under a clear sky; but at other seasons there is such shifting of shades, such islands of light, such columns and buttresses of sunshine, as might almost make a painter burn his brushes, as the sorcerers did their books of magic when they saw the divinity which rested upon the apostles. The very snow, which you would perhaps think must monotonize the mountains, gives new varieties; it brings out their recesses and designates all their inequalities; it impresses a better feeling of their height; and it reflects such tints of saffron, or fawn, or rose-color to the evening sun. *O Maria Santissima!* Mount Horeb, with the glory upon its summit, might have been more glorious, but not more beautiful than old Skiddaw in his winter pelisse. I will not quarrel with frost, though the fellow has the impudence to take me by the nose. The lake-side has such ten thousand charms: a fleece of snow or of the hoar-frost lies on the fallen trees or large stones; the grass-points, that just peer above the water, are powdered with diamonds; the ice on the margin with chains of crystal, and such veins and wavy lines of beauty as mock all art; and, to crown all, Coleridge and I have found out that stones thrown upon the lake when frozen make a noise like singing birds, and when you whirl on it a large flake of ice, away the shivers slide, chirping and warbling like a flight of finches." This tells of a February at Keswick; the following describes the *goings on* under an autumn sky: "The mountains on Thursday evening, before the sun was quite down, or the moon bright, were all of one dead-blue color; their rifts and rocks and swells and scars had all disappeared—the surface was perfectly uniform, nothing but the outline distinct; and this even surface of dead blue, from its unnatural uniformity, made them, though not transparent, appear transvious—as though they were of some soft or cloudy texture through which you could have passed. I never saw any appearance so perfectly unreal. Sometimes a blazing sunset seems to steep them through and through with red light; or it is a cloudy morning, and the sunshine slants down through a rift in the clouds, and the pillar of light makes the spot whereon it falls so emerald green, that it looks like a little field of Paradise. At night you lose the mountains, and the wind so stirs up the lake that it looks like the sea by moonlight."

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* For Westall's drawing, and the description of Walla Crag, see "Sir Thomas More:" Colloquy VI.

If Southey had not a companion by his side, the solitude of his ramble was unbroken; he never had the knack of forgathering with chance acquaintance. With intellectual and moral boldness, and with high spirits, he united a constitutional bashfulness and reserve. His retired life, his habits of constant study, and, in later years, his shortness of sight, fell in with this infirmity. He would not patronize his humbler neighbors; he had a kind of imaginative jealousy on behalf of their rights as independent persons; and he could not be sure of straightway discovering, by any genius or instinct of good-fellowship, that common ground whereon strangers are at home with one another. Hence—and Southey himself wished that it had been otherwise—long as he resided at Keswick, there were perhaps not twenty persons of the lower ranks whom he knew by sight. "After slightly returning the salutation of some passer-by," says his son, "he would again mechanically lift his cap as he heard some well-known name in reply to his inquiries, and look back with regret that the greeting had not been more cordial."

If the ice were fairly broken, he found it natural to be easy and familiar, and by those whom he employed he was regarded with affectionate reverence. Mrs. Wilson—kind and generous creature—remained in Greta Hall tending the children as they grew up, until she died, grieved for by the whole household. Joseph Glover, who created the scarecrow "Statues" for the garden—male and female created he them, as the reader may see them figured toward the close of *The Doctor*—Glover, the artist who set up Edith's fantastic chimney-piece ("Well, Miss Southey," cried honest Joseph, "I've done my Devils"), was employed by Southey during five-and-twenty-years, ever since he was a 'prentice-boy. If any warm-hearted neighbor, known or unknown to him, came forward with a demand on Southey's sympathies, he was sure to meet a neighborly response. When the miller, who had never spoken to him before, invited the laureate to rejoice with him over the pig he had killed—the finest ever fattened—and when Southey was led to the place where that which had ceased to be pig and was not yet bacon, was hung up by the hind feet, he filled up the measure of the good man's joy by hearty appreciation of a porker's points. But Cumberland enthusiasm seldom flames abroad with so prodigal a blaze as that of the worthy miller's heart.

Within the charmed circle of home, Southey's temper and manners were full of a strong and sweet hilarity; and the home circle was in itself a considerable group of persons. The Pantisocratic scheme of a community was, after all, near finding a fulfilment, only that the Greta ran by in place of the Susquehanna, and that Southey took upon his own shoulders the work of the dead Lovell, and of Coleridge, who lay in weakness and dejection, whelmed under the tide of dreams. For some little time Coleridge continued to reside at Keswick, an admirable companion in almost all moods of mind, for all kinds of wisdom, and all kinds of nonsense. When he was driven abroad in search of health, it seemed as if a brightness were gone out of the air, and the horizon of life had grown definite and contracted. "It is now almost ten years," Southey writes, "since he and I first met in my rooms at Oxford, which meeting decided the destiny of both. . . . I am perpetually pained at thinking what he ought to be, . . . but the tidings of his death would come upon me more like a stroke of lightning than any evil I have ever yet endured."

Mrs. Coleridge, with her children, remained at Greta Hall. That quaint little metaphysician, Hartley—now answering to the name of Moses, now to that of Job, the oddest of all God's creatures—was an unceasing wonder and delight to his uncle: "a strange, strange boy, 'exquisitely wild,' an utter visionary, like the moon among thin clouds, he moves in a circle of his own making. He alone is a light of his own. Of all human beings I never saw one so utterly naked of self." When his father expressed surprise that Hartley should take his pleasure of wheelbarrow-riding so sadly, "The pity is"—explained little Job—"the pity is, *I'se* always thinking of my thoughts." "'I'm a boy of a very religious turn,' he says; for he always talks of himself and examines his own character, just as if he were speaking of another person, and as impartially. Every night he makes an extempore prayer aloud; but it is always in bed, and not till he is comfortable there and got into the mood. When he is ready, he touches Mrs. Wilson, who sleeps with him, and says 'Now listen!' and off he sets like a preacher." Younger than Hartley was Derwent Coleridge, a fair, broad-chested boy, with merry eye and roguish lips, now grown out of that yellow frock in which he had earned his name of Stumpy Canary. Sara Coleridge, when her uncle came to

Keswick after the death of his own Margery, was a little grand-lama at that worshipful age of seven months. A fall into the Greta, a year and a half later, helped to change her to the delicate creature whose large blue eyes would look up timidly from under her lace border and mufflings of muslin. No feeling towards their father save a reverent loyalty did the Coleridge children ever learn under Southey's roof, But when the pale-faced wanderer returned from Italy, he surprised and froze his daughter by a sudden revelation of that jealousy which is the fond injustice of an unsatisfied heart, and which a child who has freely given and taken love finds it hard to comprehend. "I think my dear father," writes Sara Coleridge, "was anxious that I should learn to love him and the Wordsworths and their children, and not cling so exclusively to my mother and all around me at home." Love him and revere his memory she did; to Wordsworth she was conscious of owing more than to any other teacher or inspirer in matters of the intellect and imagination. But in matters of the heart and conscience the daily life of Southey was the book in which she read; he was, she would emphatically declare, "upon the whole, the best man she had ever known."

But the nepotism of the most "nepotious" uncle is not a perfect substitute for fatherhood with its hopes and fears. May-morning of the year 1804 saw "an Edithling, very, very ugly, with no more beauty than a young dodo," nestling by Edith Southey's side. A trembling thankfulness possessed the little one's father; but when the Arctic weather changed suddenly to days of genial sunshine, and groves and gardens burst into living greenery, and rang with song, his heart was caught into the general joy. Southey was not without a presentiment that his young dodo would improve. Soon her premature activity of eye and spirits troubled him, and he tried, while cherishing her, to put a guard upon his heart. "I did not mean to trust my affections again on so frail a foundation—and yet the young one takes me from my desk and makes me talk nonsense as fluently as you perhaps can imagine." When Sara Coleridge—not yet five years old, but already, as she half believed, promised in marriage to Mr. De Quincey—returned after a short absence to Greta Hall, she saw her baby cousin, sixteen months younger, and therefore not yet marriageable, grown into a little girl very fair, with thick golden hair, and round, rosy cheeks. Edith Southey inherited something of her father's looks and of his swift intelligence; with her growing beauty of face and limbs a growing excellence of inward nature kept pace. At twenty she was the "elegant cygnet" of Amelia Opie's album verses,

"'Twas pleasant to meet
And see thee, famed Swan of the Derwent's fair tide,
With that elegant cygnet that floats by thy side"—

a compliment her father mischievously would not let her Elegancy forget. Those who would know her in the loveliness of youthful womanhood may turn to Wordsworth's poem, *The Triad*, where she appears first of the three "sister nymphs" of Keswick and Rydal; or Hartley Coleridge's exquisite sonnet, *To a lofty beauty, from her poor kinsman:*

> "Methinks thy scornful mood,
> And bearing high of stately womanhood—
> Thy brow where Beauty sits to tyrannize
> O'er humble love, had made me sadly fear thee:
> For never sure was seen a royal bride,
> Whose gentleness gave grace to so much pride—
> My very thoughts would tremble to be near thee,
> But when I see thee by thy father's side
> Old times unqueen thee, and old loves endear thee."

But it is best of all to remember Southey's daughter in connection with one letter of her father's. In 1805 he visited Scotland alone; he had looked forward to carrying on the most cherished purpose of his life—the *History of Portugal*—among the libraries of Lisbon. But it would be difficult to induce Mrs. Southey to travel with the Edithling. Could he go alone? The short absence in Scotland served to test his heart, and so to make his future clear:

> "I need not tell you, my own dear Edith, not to read my letters aloud till you have first of all seen what is written only for yourself. What I have now to say to you is, that having been eight days from home, with as little discomfort, and as little reason for discomfort, as a man can reasonably expect, I have yet felt so little comfortable, so great sense of solitariness, and so many homeward yearnings, that certainly I will not go to Lisbon without you; a resolution which, if your feelings be at all like mine, will not displease you. If, on mature consideration, you think the inconvenience of a voyage more than you ought to submit to, I must be content to stay in England, as on my part it certainly is not worth while to sacrifice a year's happiness; for though not unhappy (my mind is too active and too well disciplined to yield to any such criminal weakness), still, without you I am not happy. But for your sake as well as my own, and for little Edith's sake, I will not consent to any separation; the growth of a year's love between her and me, if it please God that she should live, is a thing too delightful in itself, and too valuable in its consequences, both to her and me, to be given up for any light inconvenience either on your part or mine. An absence of a year would make her effectually forget me. . . . But of these things we will talk at leisure; only, dear, dear Edith, we must not part."

Such wisdom of the heart was justified; the year of growing love bore precious fruit. When Edith May was ten years old her father dedicated to her, in verses laden with a father's tenderest thoughts and feelings, his *Tale of Paraguay*. He recalls the day of her birth, the preceding sorrow for his first child, whose infant features have faded from him like a passing cloud; the gladness of that singing month of May; the seasons that followed during which he observed the dawning of the divine light in her eyes; the playful guiles by which he won from her repeated kisses: to him these ten years seem like yesterday; but to her they have brought discourse of reason, with the sense of time and change:

> "And I have seen thine eyes suffused in grief
> When I have said that with autumnal gray
> The touch of old hath mark'd thy father's head;
> That even the longest day of life is brief,
> And mine is falling fast into the yellow leaf."

Other children followed, until a happy stir of life filled the house. Emma, the quietest of infants, whose voice was seldom heard, and whose dark-gray eyes too seldom shone in her father's study, slipped quietly out of the world after a hand's-breadth of existence; but to Southey she was no more really lost than the buried brother and sister were to the cottage girl of Wordsworth's *We are Seven.* "I have five children," he says in 1809; "three of them at home, and two under my mother's care in heaven." Of all, the most radiantly beautiful was Isabel; the most passionately loved was Herbert. "My other two are the most perfect contrast you ever saw. Bertha, whom I call Queen Henry the Eighth, from her likeness to King Bluebeard, grows like Jonah's gourd, and is the very picture of robust health; and little Kate hardly seems to grow at all, though perfectly well—she is round as a mushroom-button. Bertha, the bluff queen, is just as grave as Kate is garrulous; they are inseparable playfellows, and go about the house hand in hand."

Among the inmates of Greta Hall, to overlook Lord Nelson and Bona Marietta, with their numerous successors, would be a grave delinquency. To be a cat, was to be a privileged member of the little republic to which Southey gave laws. Among the fragments at the end of *The Doctor* will be found a Chronicle History of the Cattery of Cat's Eden; and some of Southey's frolic letters are written as if his whole business in life were that of secretary for feline affairs in Greta Hall. A house, he declared, is never perfectly furnished for enjoyment unless there is in it a child rising three years old and a kitten rising six weeks; "kitten is in the animal world what the rosebud is in the garden." Lord Nelson, an ugly specimen of the streaked-carroty or Judas-colored kind, yet withal a good cat, affectionate, vigilant, and brave, was succeeded by Madame Bianchi, a beautiful and singular creature, white, with a fine tabby tail; "her wild eyes were bright, and green as the Duchess de Cadaval's emerald necklace." She fled away with her niece Pulcheria on the day when good old Mrs. Wilson died; nor could any allurements induce the pair to domesticate themselves again. For some time a cloud of doom seemed to hang over Cat's Eden. Ovid and Virgil, Othello the Moor, and Pope Joan perished miserably. At last Fortune, as if to make amends for her unkindness, sent to Greta Hall almost together the never-to-be-enough-praised Rumpelstilzchen (afterwards raised for services against rats to be His Serene Highness the Archduke Rumpelstilzchen), and the equally-to-be-praised Hurly-burlybuss. With whom too soon we must close the catalogue.

The revenue to maintain this household was in the main won by Southey's pen. "It is a difficult as well as a delicate task," he wrote in the *Quarterly Review*, "to advise a youth of ardent mind and aspiring thoughts in the choice of a profession; but a wise man will have no hesitation in exhorting him to choose anything rather than literature. Better that he should seek his fortune before the mast, or with a musket on his shoulder and a knapsack on his back; better that he should follow the plough, or work at the loom or the lathe, or sweat over the anvil, than trust to literature as the only means of his support." Southey's own bent towards literature was too strong to be altered. But, while he accepted loyally the burdens of his profession as a man of letters, he knew how stout a back is needed to bear them month after month and year after year. Absolutely dependent on his pen he was at no time. His generous friend Wynn, upon coming of age, allowed him annually 160*l.*, until, in 1807, he was able to procure for Southey a Government pension for literary services amounting, clear of taxes, to nearly the same sum. Southey had as truly as any man the pride of independence, but he had none of its vanity; there was no humiliation in accepting a service from one whom friendship had made as close as a brother. Men, he says, are as much better for the good offices which they receive as for those they bestow; and his own was no niggard hand. Knowing both to give and to take, with him the remembrance that he owed much to others was among the precious possessions of life which bind us to our kind with bonds of sonship, not of slavery. Of the many kindnesses which he received he never forgot one. "Had it not been for your aid," he writes to Wynn, forty years after their first meeting in Dean's Yard, "I should have been irretrievably wrecked when I ran upon the shoals, with all sail set, in the very outset of my voyage." And to another good old friend, who from his own modest station applauded while Southey ran forward in the race: "Do you suppose, Cottle, that I have forgotten those true and most essential acts of friendship which you showed me when I stood most in need of them? Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding-ring and paid my marriage-fees was supplied by you. It was with your sisters I left Edith during my six months' absence, and for the six months after my return it was from you that I received, week by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to live by other means. It is not the settling of a cash account that can cancel obligations like these. You are in the habit of preserving your letters, and if you were not, I would entreat you to preserve *this*, that it might be seen hereafter. . . . My head throbs and my eyes burn with these recollections. Good-night! my dear old friend and benefactor."

Anxiety about his worldly fortunes never cost Southey a sleepless night. His disposition was always hopeful; relying on Providence, he says, I could rely upon myself. When he had little, he lived upon little, never spending when it was necessary to spare; and his means grew with his expenses. Business habits he had none; never in his life did he cast up an account; but in a general way he knew that money comes by honest toil and grows by diligent husbandry. Upon Mrs. Southey, who had an eye to all the household outgoings, the cares of this life fell more heavily. Sara Coleridge calls to mind her aunt as she moved about Greta Hall intent on house affairs, "with her fine figure and quietly commanding air." Alas! under this gracious dignity of manner the wear and tear of life were doing their work surely. Still, it was honest wear and tear. "I never knew her to do an unkind act," says Southey, "nor say an unkind word;" but when stroke followed upon stroke of sorrow, they found her without that elastic temper which rises and recovers itself. Until the saddest of afflictions made her helpless, everything was left to her management, and was managed so quietly and well, that, except in times of sickness and bereavement, "I had," writes her husband, "literally no cares." Thus free from harass, Southey toiled in his library; he toiled not for bread alone, but also for freedom. There were great designs before him which, he was well aware, if ever realized, would make but a poor return to the household coffer. To gain time and a vantage-ground for these, he was content to yield much of his strength to work of temporary value, always contriving, however, to strike a mean in this journeyman service between what was most and least akin to his proper pursuits. When a parcel of books arrived from the *Annual Review*, he groaned in spirit over the sacrifice of time; but patience! it is, after all, better, he would reflect, than pleading in a court of law; better than being called up at midnight to a patient; better than calculating profit and loss at a counter; better, in short, than anything but independence. "I am a quiet, patient, easy-going hack of the mule breed"—he writes to Grosvenor Bedford—"regular as clock-work in my pace, sure-footed, bearing the burden which is laid on me, and only obstinate in choosing my own path. If Gifford could see me by this fireside, where, like Nicodemus, one candle suffices me in a large room, he would see a man in a coat 'still more threadbare than his own,' when he wrote his 'Imitation,' working hard and getting little—a bare maintenance, and hardly that; writing poems and history for posterity with his whole heart and soul; one daily progressive in learning, not so learned as he is poor, not so poor as proud, not so proud as happy. Grosvenor, there is not a lighter-hearted nor a happier man upon the face of this wide world." When these words were written, Herbert stood by his father's side; it was sweet to work that his boy might have his play-time glad and free.

The public estimate of Southey's works as expressed in pounds, shillings, and pence, was lowest where he held that it ought to have been highest. For the *History of Brazil*, a work of stupendous toil, which no one in England could have produced save Southey himself, he had not received, after eight years, as much as for a single article in the *Quarterly Review*. *Madoc*, the pillar, as he supposed, on which his poetical fame was to rest; *Madoc*, which he dismissed with an awed feeling, as if in it he were parting with a great fragment of his life, brought its author, after twelve months' sales, the sum of 3*l.* 17*s.* 1*d.* On the other hand, for his *Naval Biography*, which interested him less than most of his works, and which was undertaken after hesitation, he was promised five hundred guineas a volume. Notwithstanding his unwearied exertions, his modest scale of expenditure, and his profitable connection with the *Quarterly Review*—for an important article he would receive 100*l.*—he never had a year's income in advance until that year, late in his life, in which Sir Robert Peel offered him a baronetcy. In 1818, the lucky payment of a bad debt enabled him to buy 300*l.* in the Three-per-cents. "I have 100*l.* already there," he writes, "and shall then be worth 12*l.* per annum." By 1821 this sum had grown to 625*l.*, the gatherings of half a lifetime. In that year his friend John May, whose acquaintance he had made in Portugal, and to whose kindness he was a debtor, suffered the loss of his fortune. As soon as Southey had heard the state of affairs, his decision was formed. "By this post," he tells his friend, "I write to Bedford, desiring that he will transfer to you 625*l.* in the Three-per-cents. I wish it was more, and that I had more at my command in any way. I shall in the spring, if I am paid for the first volume of my History as soon as it is finished. One hundred I should, at all events, have sent you then. It shall be as much more as I receive." And he goes on in cheery words to invite John May to break away from business and come to Keswick, there to lay in "a pleasant store of recollections which in all moods of mind are wholesome." One rejoices that Southey, poor of worldly goods, knew the happiness of being so simply and nobly generous.

Blue and white china, mediæval ivories, engravings by the Little Masters, Chippendale cabinets, did not excite pining desire in Southey's breast; yet in one direction he indulged the passion of a collector. If, with respect to any of "the things independent of the will," he showed a want of moderation unworthy of his discipleship to Epictetus, it was assuredly with respect to books. Before he possessed a fixed home, he was already moored to his folios; and when once he was fairly settled at Keswick, many a time the carriers on the London road found their lading the larger by a weighty packet in its way to Greta Hall. Never did he run north or south for a holiday, but the inevitable parcel preceded or followed his return. Never did he cross to the continent but a bulkier bale arrived in its own good time, inclosing precious things. His morality, in all else void of offence, here yielded to the seducer. It is thought that Southey was in the main honest; but if Dirk Hatteraick had run ashore a hundredweight of the Acta Sanctorum duty-free, the king's laureate was not the man to set the sharks upon him; and it is to be feared that the pattern of probity, the virtuous Southey himself, might in such circumstances be found, under cover of night, lugging his prize landwards from its retreat beneath the rocks. Unquestionably, at one time certain parcels from Portugal—only of such a size as could be carried under the arm—were silently brought ashore to the defrauding of the revenue, and somehow found their way, by and by, to Greta Hall. "We maintain a trade," says the Governor of the Strangers' House in Bacon's philosophical romance, "not for gold, silver, or jewels, nor for silks, nor for spices, nor any other commodity of matter, but only for God's first creature, which was *light.*" Such, too, was Southey's trade, and he held that God's first creature is free to travel unchallenged by revenue-cutter.

"Why, Montesinos," asks the ghostly Sir Thomas More in one of Southey's *Colloquies*, "with these books and the delight you take in their constant society, what have you to covet or desire?" "Nothing," is the answer, ". . . except more books." When Southey, in 1805, went to see Walter Scott, it occurred to him in Edinburgh that, having had neither new hat nor coat since little Edith was born, he must surely be in want of both; and here in the metropolis of the North was an opportunity of arraying himself to his desire. "Howbeit," he says, "on considering the really respectable appearance which my old ones made for a traveller—and considering, moreover, that as learning was better than house or land, it certainly must be much better than fine clothes—I laid out all my money in books, and came home to wear out my old wardrobe in the winter." De Quincey called Southey's library his wife, and in a certain sense it was wife and mistress and mother to him. The presence and enjoying of his books was not the sole delight they afforded; there was also the pursuit, the surprisal, the love-making or wooing. And at last, in his hours of weakness, once more a little child, he would walk slowly round his library, looking at his cherished volumes, taking them down mechanically, and when he could no longer read, pressing them to his lips. In happier days the book-stalls of London knew the tall figure, the rapid stride, the quick-seeing eye, the eager fingers. Lisbon, Paris, Milan, Amsterdam, contributed to the rich confusion that, from time to time, burdened the floors of library and bedrooms and passages in Greta Hall. Above all, he was remembered at Brussels by that best of bookmen, Verbeyst. What mattered it that Verbeyst was a sloven, now receiving his clients with gaping shirt, and now with stockingless feet? Did he not duly honor letters, and had he not 300,000 volumes from which to choose? If in a moment of prudential weakness one failed to carry off such a treasure as the *Monumenta Boica* or Colgar's *Irish Saints*, there was a chance that in Verbeyst's vast store-house the volume might lurk for a year or two. And Verbeyst loved his books only less than he loved his handsome, good-natured wife, who for a liberal customer would fetch the bread and burgundy. Henry Taylor dwelt in Robert Southey's heart of hearts; but let not Henry Taylor treasonably hint that Verbeyst, the prince of booksellers, had not a prince's politeness of punctuality. If sundry books promised had not arrived, it was because they were not easily procured; moreover, the good-natured wife had died—*bien des malheurs*, and Verbeyst's heart was fallen into a lethargy. "Think ill of our fathers which are in the Row, think ill of John Murray, think ill of Colburn, think ill of the whole race of bibliopoles, except Verbeyst, who is always to be thought of with liking and respect." And when the bill of lading, coming slow but sure, announced that saints and chroniclers and poets were on their way, "by this day month," wrote Southey, "they will probably be here; then shall I be happier than if his Majesty King George the Fourth were to give orders that I should be clothed in purple, and sleep upon gold, and have a chain upon my neck, and sit next him because of my wisdom, and be called his cousin."

Thus the four thousand volumes, which lay piled about the library when Southey first gathered his possessions together, grew and grew, year after year, until the grand total mounted up to eight, to ten, to fourteen thousand. Now Kirke White's brother Neville sends him a gift of Sir William Jones's works, thirteen volumes, in binding of bewildering loveliness. Now Landor ships from some Italian port a chest containing treasures of less dubious value than the Raffaelles and Leonardos, with which he liberally supplied his art-loving friends. Oh, the joy of opening such a chest; of discovering the glorious folios; of glancing with the shy amorousness of first desire at title-page and colophon; of growing familiarity; of tracing out the history suggested by book-plate or autograph; of finding a lover's excuses for cropped margin, or water-stain, or worm-hole! Then the calmer happiness of arranging his favorites on new shelves; of taking them down again, after supper, in the season of meditation and currant-rum; and of wondering for which among his father's books Herbert will care most when all of them shall be his own. "It would please you," Southey writes to his old comrade, Bedford, "to see such a display of literary wealth, which is at once the pride of my eye, and the joy of my heart, and the food of my mind; indeed, more than metaphorically, meat, drink, and clothes for me and mine. I verily believe that no one in my station was ever so rich before, and I am very sure that no one in any station had ever a more thorough enjoyment of riches of any kind or in any way."

Southey's Spanish and Portuguese collection—if Heber's great library be set aside—was probably the most remarkable gathering of such books in the possession of any private person in this country. It included several manuscripts, some of which were displayed with due distinction upon brackets. Books in white and gold—vellum or parchment bound, with gilt lettering in the old English type which Southey loved—were arranged in effective positions pyramid-wise. Southey himself had learned the mystery of book-binding, and from him his daughters acquired that art; the ragged volumes were decently clothed in colored cotton prints; these, presenting a strange patchwork of colors, quite filled one room, which was known as the Cottonian Library. "Paul," a book-room on the ground-floor, had been so called because "Peter," the organ-room, was robbed to fit it with books. "Paul is a great comfort to us, and being dressed up with

Peter's property, makes a most respectable appearance, and receives that attention which is generally shown to the youngest child. The study has not actually been Petered on Paul's account, but there has been an exchange negotiated which we think is for their mutual advantage. Twenty gilt volumes, from under the 'Beauties of England and Wales,' have been marched downstairs rank and file, and their place supplied by the long set of Lope de Vega with green backs."

Southey's books, as he assures his ghostly monitor in the *Colloquies*, were not drawn up on his shelves for display, however much the pride of the eye might be gratified in beholding them; they were on actual service. Generations might pass away before some of them would again find a reader; in their mountain home they were prized and known as perhaps they never had been known before. Not a few of the volumes had been cast up from the wreck of family or convent libraries during the Revolution. "Yonder Acta Sanctorum belonged to the Capuchines at Ghent. This book of St. Bridget's Revelations, in which not only all the initial letters are illuminated, but every capital throughout the volume was colored, came from the Carmelite Nunnery at Bruges. . . . Here are books from Colbert's library; here others from the Lamoignon one. . . . Yonder Chronicle History of King D. Manoel, by Damiam de Goes; and yonder General History of Spain, by Esteban de Garibay, are signed by their respective authors. . . . This copy of Casaubon's Epistles was sent to me from Florence by Walter Landor. He had perused it carefully, and to that perusal we are indebted for one of the most pleasing of his Conversations. . . . Here is a book with which Lauderdale amused himself, when Cromwell kept him a prisoner in Windsor Castle. . . . Here I possess these gathered treasures of time, the harvest of many generations, laid up in my garners: and when I go to the window, there is the lake, and the circle of the mountains, and the illimitable sky."

Not a few of his books were dead, and to live among these was like living among the tombs; "Behold, this also is vanity," Southey makes confession. But when Sir Thomas questions, "Has it proved to you 'vexation of spirit' also?" the Cumberland mountain-dweller breaks forth: "Oh no! for never can any man's life have been passed more in accord with his own inclinations, nor more answerably to his desires. Excepting that peace which, through God's infinite mercy, is derived from a higher source, it is to literature, humanly speaking, that I am beholden, not only for the means of subsistence, but for every blessing which I enjoy; health of mind and activity of mind, contentment, cheerfulness, continual employment, and therefore continual pleasure. *Suavissima vita indies sentire se fieri meliorem;* and this, as Bacon has said and Clarendon repeated, is the benefit that a studious man enjoys in retirement." Such a grave gladness underlay all Southey's frolic moods, and in union with a clear-sighted acceptance of the conditions of human happiness—its inevitable shocks, its transitory nature as far as it belongs to man's life on earth—made up part of his habitual temper.

Southey coursed from page to page with a greyhound's speed; a tiny *s* pencilled in the margin served to indicate what might be required for future use. Neatness he had learnt from Miss Tyler long ago; and by experience he acquired his method. On a slip of paper which served as marker he would note the pages to which he needed to return. In the course of a few hours he had classified and arranged everything in a book which it was likely he would ever want. A reference to the less important passages sufficed; those of special interest were transcribed by his wife, or one of his daughters, or more frequently by Southey himself; finally, these transcripts were brought together in packets, under such headings as would make it easy to discover any portion of their contents.

Such was his ordinary manner of eviscerating an author, but it was otherwise with the writers of his affection. On some—such as Jackson and Jeremy Taylor—"he *fed*," as he expressed it, "slowly and carefully, dwelling on the page, and taking in its contents, deeply and deliberately, like an epicure with his wine 'searching the subtle flavor.'" Such chosen writers remained for all times and seasons faithful and cherished friends:

"With them I take delight in weal,
  And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
  How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thankful gratitude."

"If I were confined to a score of English books," says Southey, "Sir Thomas Browne would, I think, be one of them; nay, probably it would be one if the selection were cut down to twelve. My library, if reduced to those bounds, would consist of Shakespere, Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton; Jackson, Jeremy Taylor, and South; Isaac Walton, Sidney's Arcadia, Fuller's Church History, and Sir Thomas Browne; and what a wealthy and well-stored mind would that man have, what an inexhaustible reservoir, what a Bank of England to draw upon for profitable thoughts and delightful associations, who should have fed upon them!" It must have gone hard with Southey, in making out this list, to exclude Clarendon, and doubtless, if the choice were not limited to books written in English, the Utopia would have urged its claim to admission. With less difficulty he could skip the whole of the eighteenth century. From *Samson Agonistes* to *The Task*, there was no English poem which held a foremost place in his esteem. Berkeley and Butler he valued highly; but Robert South seemed to him the last of the race of the giants. An ancestral connection with Locke was not a source of pride to Southey; he respected neither the philosopher's politics nor his metaphysics; still, it is pleasant, he says, to hear of somebody between one's self and Adam who has left a name.

Four volumes of what are called Southey's *Commonplace Books* have been published, containing some three thousand double-column pages; and these are but a selection from the total mass of his transcripts. It is impossible to give a notion of a miscellany drawn from so wide-ranging a survey of poetry, biography, history, travels, topography, divinity, not in English alone, but also in Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese. Yet certain main lines can be traced which give some meaning to this huge accumulation. It is easy to perceive that the collector wrought under an historical bias, and that social, literary, and ecclesiastical history were the directions in which the historical tendency found its play. Such work of transcribing, though it did not rest Southey's hand, was a relief to his mind after the excitement of composition, and some of it may pass for a kind of busy idleness; but most of his transcripts were made with a definite purpose—that of furnishing materials for work either actually accomplished or still in prospect, when at last the brain grew dull and the fingers slack. "I am forever making collections," he writes, "and storing up materials which may not come into use till the Greek Calends. And this I have been doing for five-and-twenty years! It is true that I draw daily upon my hoards, and should be poor without them; but in prudence I ought now to be working up those materials rather than adding to so much dead stock." When Ticknor visited him in 1819, Southey opened for the young American his great bundles of manuscript materials for the *History of Portugal* and the *History of the Portuguese East Indies.* Southey had charmed him by the kindness of his reception; by the air of culture and of goodness in his home; by his talk, bright and eager, "for the quickness of his mind expresses itself in the fluency of his utterance; and yet he is ready upon almost any subject that can be proposed to him, from the extent of his knowledge." And now, when Ticknor saw spread before him the evidence of such unexampled industry, a kind of bewilderment took possession of him. "Southey," he writes in his diary, "is certainly an extraordinary man, one of those whose characters I find it difficult to comprehend, because I hardly know how such elements can be brought together, such rapidity of mind with such patient labor and wearisome exactness, so mild a disposition with so much nervous excitability, and a poetical talent so elevated with such an immense mass of minute, dull learning."

If Ticknor had been told that this was due to Epictetus, it might have puzzled him still more; but it is certain that only through the strenuous appliance of will to the formation of character could Southey have grown to be what he was. He had early been possessed by the belief that he must not permit himself to become the slave or the victim of sensibility, but that in the little world of man there are two powers ruling by a Divine right—reason and conscience, in loyal obedience to which lies our highest freedom. Then, too, the circumstances of his life prompted him to self-mastery and self-management.

That he should every day overtake a vast amount of work, was not left to his choosing or declining—it was a matter of necessity; to accomplish this, he must get all possible advantage out of his rapidity of intellect and his energy of feeling, and at the same time he must never put an injurious strain on these. It would not do for Southey to burn away to-day in some white flame of excitement the nerve which he needed for use to-morrow. He could not afford to pass a sleepless night. If his face glowed or his brain throbbed, it was a warning that he had gone far enough. His very susceptibility to nervous excitement rendered caution the more requisite. William Taylor had compared him to the mimosa. Hazlitt remembered him with a quivering lip, a hectic flush upon his cheek, a roving fire in his eye, a falcon glance, a look at once aspiring and dejected. Crabb Robinson found in him a likeness to Shelley. Humphry Davy had proved the fineness of his sensibility by that odd neurometer, the nitrous oxide. "The truth is," writes Southey, "that though some persons, whose knowledge of me is scarcely skin-deep, suppose I have no nerves, because I have great self-control as far as regards the surface, if it were not for great self-management, and what may be called a strict intellectual regimen, I should very soon be in a deplorable state of what is called nervous disease, and this would have been the case any time during the last twenty years." And again: "A man had better break a bone, or even lose a limb, than shake his nervous system. I, who never talk about my nerves (and am supposed to have none by persons who see as far into me as they do into a stone wall), know this." Southey could not afford to play away his health at hazard, and then win it back in the lounge of some foreign watering-place. His plan, on the contrary, was to keep it, and to think about it as little as possible. A single prescription sufficed for a lifetime—*In labore quies.* "I think I may lay claim," he says, "to the praise of self-management both in body and mind without paying too much attention to either—exercising a diseased watchfulness, or playing any tricks with either." It would not have been difficult for Southey, with such a temperament as his, to have wrecked himself at the outset of his career. With beautiful foiled lives of young men Southey had a peculiar sympathy. But the gods sometimes give white hairs as an aureole to their favored ones. Perhaps, on the whole, for him it was not only more prudent but also more chivalrous to study to be quiet; to create a home for those who looked to him for security; to guard the happiness of tender women; to make smooth ways for the feet of little children; to hold hands in old age with the friends of his youth; to store his mind with treasures of knowledge; to strengthen and chasten his own heart; to grow yearly in love for his country and her venerable heritage of manners, virtue, and laws; to add to her literature the outcome of an adult intellect and character; and having fought a strenuous and skilful fight, to fall as one whose sword an untimely stroke has shattered in his hand.

CHAPTER V.

WAYS OF LIFE AT KESWICK, 1803—1839 (*continued*).

THE texture of Southey's life was so uniform, the round from morning till night repeated itself with so much regularity, that one day may stand as representative of a thousand. We possess his record of how the waking hours went by when he was about thirty years old, and a similar record written when he was twice that age. His surroundings had changed in the mean time, and he himself had changed; the great bare room which he used from the first as a study, fresh plastered in 1804, with the trowel-lines on the ceiling pierced by the flaws of winter, containing two chairs and a little table—"God help me!" he exclaims, "I look in it like a cock-robin in a church"—this room had received, long before 1834, its lining of comely books, its white and gold pyramids, its brackets, its cherished portraits. The occupant of the study had the same spare frame, the same aspect of lightness and of strength, the same full eyebrows shadowing the dark-brown eyes, the same variously expressive muscular mouth; the youthful wildness in his countenance had given place to a thoughtful expression, and the abundant hair still clustering over his great brow was snowy white. Whatever had changed, his habits—though never his tyrants—remained, with some variation in detail, the same. "My actions," he writes to a friend not very long after his arrival in Keswick, "are as regular as those of St. Dunstan's quarter-boys. Three pages of history after breakfast (equivalent to five in small quarto printing); then to transcribe and copy for the press, or to make my selections and biographies, or what else suits my humor till dinner-time; from dinner to tea I read, write letters, see the newspaper, and very often indulge in a siesta—for sleep agrees with me. . . . After tea I go to poetry, and correct, and rewrite, and copy till I am tired, and then turn to anything else till supper; and this is my life—which, if it be not a very merry one, is yet as happy as heart could wish." "See how the day is disposed of!" begins the later record; "I get out of bed as the clock strikes six, and shut the house-door after me as it strikes seven.* After two hours with Davies, home to breakfast, after which Cuthbert engages me till about half-past ten, and when the post brings no letters that either interest or trouble me (for of the latter I have many), by eleven I have done with the newspaper, and can then set about what is properly the business of the day. But letters are often to be written, and I am liable to frequent interruptions; so that there are not many mornings in which I can command from two to three unbroken hours at the desk. At two I take my daily walk, be the weather what it may, and when the weather permits, with a book in my hand; dinner at four, read about half an hour; then take to the sofa with a different book, and after a few pages get my soundest sleep, till summoned to tea at six. My best time during the winter is by candle-light; twilight interferes with it a little; and in the season of company I can never count upon an evening's work. Supper at half-past nine, after which I read an hour, and then to bed. The greatest part of my miscellaneous work is done in the odds and ends of time."

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* *I.e.*, to go to Davies' lodgings; Davies, Dr. Bell's secretary, was engaged in arranging a vast accumulation of papers with a view to forwarding Southey in his *Life of Bell.*

It was part of Southey's regimen to carry on several works at once; this he found to be economy of time, and he believed it necessary for the preservation of his health. Whenever one object entirely occupied his attention, it haunted him, oppressed him, troubled his dreams. The remedy was simple—to do one thing in the morning, another in the evening. To lay down poetry and presently to attack history seems feasible, and no ill policy for one who is forced to take all he can out of himself; but Southey would turn from one poetical theme to another, and could day by day advance with a pair of epics. This was a source of unfailing wonder to Landor. "When I write a poem," he says, "my heart and all my feelings are upon it. . . . High poems will not admit flirtation." Little by little was Southey's way, and so he got on with many things. "Last night," he writes to Bedford, "I began the Preface [to *Specimens of English Poets*]—huzza! And now, Grosvenor, let me tell you what I have to do. I am writing—1. *The History of Portugal*; 2. *The Chronicle of the Cid*; 3. *The Curse of Kehama*; 4. *Espriella's Letters*. Look you, all these I *am* writing. . . . By way of interlude comes in this preface. Don't swear, and bid me do one thing at a time. I tell you I can't afford to do one thing at a time—no, nor two neither; and it is only by doing many things that I contrive to do so much: for I cannot work long together at anything without hurting myself, and so I do everything by heats; then, by the time I am tired of one, my inclination for another is come round." A strong, deliberate energy, accordingly, is at the back of all Southey's work; but not that blind creative rapture which will have its own way, and leaves its subject weak but appeased "In the daytime I labored," says Landor, "and at night unburdened my soul, shedding many tears. My *Tiberius* has so shaken me at last that the least thing affects me violently." Southey shrank back from such agitations. A great Elizabethan poet is described by one of his contemporaries as one standing

"Up to the chin in the Pierian flood."

Southey did not wade so far; he stepped down calmly until the smooth waters touched his waist; dipped seven times, and returned to the bank. It was a beautiful and an elevating rite; but the waves sing with lyric lips only in the midmost stream; and he who sings with them, and as swift as they, need not wonder if he sink after a time, faint, breathless, delighted.

Authorship, it must be remembered, was Southey's trade, the business of his life, and this, at least, he knew how to conduct well. To be a prophet and call down flame from heaven, and disappear in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire, is sublime; but prophets can go in the strength of a single meal for more days and nights than one would choose to name in this incredulous age, and, if they eat, there are ravens to bring them food. No ravens brought loaves to Greta Hall; and Southey had an unprophet-like craving for the creature comforts of beef and bread, for wine if it might be had, and at supper for one meditative tumbler of punch or black-currant rum. Besides, what ravens were ever pledged to feed a prophet's sisters-in-law, or his nephews and nieces? Let it be praise enough for much of Southey's performance that he did good work in workmanlike fashion. To shift knowledge into more convenient positions is to render no unimportant service to mankind. In the gathering of facts, Southey was both swift and patient in an extraordinary degree; he went often alone, and he went far; in the art of exposition he was unsurpassed; and his fine moral feeling and profound sympathy with elementary justice created, as De Quincey has observed, a soul under what else might well be denominated, Miltonically, "the ribs of death." From the mending of his pens to the second reading aloud of his proof-sheets, attending as he read to the fall of each word upon the ear, Southey had a diligent care for everything that served to make his work right. He wrote at a moderate pace; rewrote; wrote a third time if it seemed desirable; corrected with minute supervision. He accomplished so much, not because he produced with unexampled rapidity, but because he worked regularly, and never fell into a mood of apathy or ennui. No periods of tempestuous vacancy lay between his periods of patient labor. One work always overlapped another—thus, that first idle day, the begetter of so many idle descendants, never came. But let us hear the craftsman giving a lesson in the knack of authorship to his brother, Dr. Henry Southey, who has a notion of writing something on the Crusades:

"Now, then, supposing that you will seriously set about the *Crusades*, I will give you such directions in the art of historical book-keeping as may save time and facilitate labor.

"Make your writing-books in foolscap quarto, and write on only one side of a leaf; draw a line down the margin, marking off space enough for your references, which should be given at the end of every paragraph; noting page, book, or chapter of the author referred to. This minuteness is now demanded, and you will yourself find it useful; for, in transcribing or in correcting proofs, it is often requisite to turn to the original authorities. Take the best author; that is to say, the one that has written most at length of all the *original* authors, upon the particular point of time on which you are employed, and draw up your account from him; then, on the opposite page, correct and amplify this from every other who has written on the same subject. This page should be divided into two columns, one of about two thirds of its breadth, the other the remaining one. You are thus enabled to *add* to your *additions*.

"One of these books you should have for your geography; that is to say, for collecting descriptions of all the principal scenes of action (which must be done from books of travels), their situation, their strength, their previous history, and in the notes, their present state. [Another book—he adds in a subsequent letter—you must keep for the bibliography of your subject.]

"These descriptions you can insert in their proper places when you transcribe. Thus also, you should collect accounts of the different tribes and dynasties which you have occasion to mention. In this manner the information which is only to be got at piecemeal, and oftentimes incidentally, when you are looking for something else, is brought together with least trouble, and almost imperceptibly.

"All relative matter not absolutely essential to the subject should go in the form of supplementary notes, and these you may make as amusing as you please, the more so, and the more curious, the better. Much trouble is saved by writing them on separate bits of paper, each the half of a quarter of a foolscap sheet—numbering them, and making an index of them; in this manner they are ready for use when they are wanted.

"It was some time before I fell unto this system of book-keeping, and I believe no better can be desired. A Welsh triad might comprehend all the rules of style. Say what you have to say as *perspicuously* as possible, as *briefly* as possible, and as *rememberably* as possible, and take no other thought about it. Omit none of those little circumstances which give life to narration, and bring old manners, old feelings, and old times before your eyes."

Winter was Southey's harvest season. Then for weeks no visitor knocked at Greta Hall, except perhaps Mr. Wordsworth, who had plodded all the way from Rydal on his indefatigable legs. But in summer interruptions were frequent, and Southey, who had time for everything, had time to spare not only for friends but for strangers. The swarm of lakers was, indeed, not what it is nowadays, but to a studious man it was, perhaps, not less formidable. By Gray's time the secret of the lakes had been found out; and if the visitors were fewer, they were less swift upon the wing, and their rank or fame often entitled them to particular attention. Coroneted coaches rolled into Keswick, luggage-laden; the American arrived sometimes to make sure that Derwentwater would not be missed out of Lake Michigan, sometimes to see King George's laureate; and cultured Americans were particularly welcome to Southey. Long-vacation reading-parties from Oxford and Cambridge—known among the good Cumberland folk as the "cathedrals"—made Keswick a resort. Well for them if, provided with an introduction, they were invited to dine at Greta Hall, were permitted to gaze on the choice old Spaniards, and to converse with the laureate's stately Edith and her learned cousin. Woe to them if after the entanglements of a Greek chorus or descriptions of the temperate man and the magnanimous man, they sought to restore their tone by a cat-worrying expedition among the cottages of Keswick. Southey's cheek glowed, his eye darkened and flashed, if he chanced to witness cruelty; some of the Cambridge "cathedrals" who received a letter concerning cats in July, 1834, may still bear the mark of its leaded thong in their moral fibre, and be the better for possessing Southey's sign-manual.

A young step-child of Oxford visited Keswick in the winter of

1811–12, and sought the acquaintance of the author of *Thalaba*. Had Southey been as intolerant or as unsympathetic as some have represented him, he could not have endured the society of one so alien in opinion and so outspoken as Shelley. But courtesy, if it were nothing more, was at least part of Southey's self-respect; his intolerance towards persons was, in truth, towards a certain ideal, a certain group of opinions; when hand touched hand and eye met eye, all intolerance vanished, and he was open to every gracious attraction of character and manner. There was much in Shelley that could not fail to interest Southey; both loved poetry, and both felt the proud, secluded grandeur of Landor's verse; both loved men, and thought the world wants mending, though their plans of reform might differ. That Shelley was a rebel expelled from Oxford did not shock Southey, who himself had been expelled from Westminster and rejected at Christ Church. Shelley's opinions were crude and violent, but their spirit was generous, and such opinions held by a youth in his teens generally mean no more than that his brain is working and his heart ardent. Shelley's rash marriage reminded Southey of another marriage, celebrated at Bristol some fifteen years ago, which proved that rashness is not always folly. The young man's admiration of *Thalaba* spoke well for him; and certainly during the earlier weeks of their intercourse there was on Shelley's part a becoming deference to one so much his superior in years and in learning, deference to one who had achieved much while Shelley still only dreamed of achievement. Southey thought he saw in the revolutionary enthusiast an image of his former self. "Here," he says, "is a man at Keswick who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794. His name is Shelley, son to the member for Shoreham. . . . At present he has got to the Pantheistic stage of philosophy, and in the course of a week I expect he will be a Berkeleyan, for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley. It has surprised him a good deal to meet, for the first time in his life, with a man who perfectly understands him and does him full justice. I tell him that all the difference between us is that he is nineteen and I am thirty-seven; and I dare say it will not be very long before I shall succeed in convincing him that he may be a true philosopher and do a great deal of good with 6000*l*. a year; the thought of which troubles him a great deal more at present than ever the want of sixpence (for I have known such a want) did me." There were other differences between Robert Southey and the inconstant star that passed by Greta Hall than that of years. Southey had quickly learned to put a bound to his desires, and within that bound to work out for himself a possession of measureless worth. It seemed to him part of a man's virtue to adhere loyally to the bond signed for each of us when we enter life. Is our knowledge limited—then let us strive within those limits. Can we never lay hands on the absolute good—then let us cherish the good things that are ours. Do we hold our dearest possessions on a limited tenure—that is hard, but is it not in the bond? How faint a loyalty is his who merely yields obedience perforce! let us rather cast in our will, unadulterate and whole, with that of our divine Leader; *sursum corda*—there is a heaven above. But Shelley—the nympholept of some radiant ante-natal sphere—fled through his brief years ever in pursuit of his lost lady of light; and for him loyalty to the bond of life seemed to mean a readiness to forget all things, however cherished, so soon as they had fulfilled their service of speeding him on towards the unattainable. It could not but be that men living under rules so diverse should before long find themselves far asunder. But they parted in 1812 in no spirit of ill-will. Southey was already a state-pensioner and a champion of the party of order in the *Quarterly Review*; this did not prevent the young apostle of liberty and fraternity from entering his doors, and enjoying Mrs. Southey's tea-cakes. Irish affairs were earnestly discussed; but Southey, who had written generously of Emmett both in his verse and in the *Quarterly*, could not be hostile to one whose illusions were only over-sanguine; and while the veritable Southey was before Shelley's eyes, he could not discern the dull hireling, the venomous apostate, the cold-blooded assassin, of freedom conjured up by Byron and others to bear Southey's name.

Three years later Shelley presented his *Alastor* to the laureate, and Southey duly acknowledged the gift. The elder poet was never slow to recognize genius in young men, but conduct was to him of higher importance than genius; he deplored some acts in Shelley's life which seemed to result directly from opinions professed at Keswick in 1811—opinions then interpreted as no more than the disdain of checks felt by every spirited boy. Southey heard no more from him until a letter came from Pisa inquiring whether Shelley's former entertainer at Keswick were his recent critic of the *Quarterly Review*, with added comments, courteous but severe, on Southey's opinions. The reply was that Southey had not written the paper, and had never in any of his writings alluded to Shelley in any way. A second letter followed on each side, the elder man pleading, exhorting, warning; the younger justifying himself, and returning to the attack. "There the correspondence ended. On Shelley's part it was conducted with the courtesy which was natural to him; on mine, in the spirit of one who was earnestly admonishing a fellow-creature."

Much of Southey's time—his most valued possession—was given to his correspondents. Napoleon's plan of answering letters, according to Bourrienne, was to let them lie unopened for six weeks, by which time nine out of ten had answered themselves, or had been answered by history. Coleridge's plan—says De Quincey—was shorter; he opened none and answered none. To answer all forthwith was the habit of Southey. Thinking doubtless of their differences in such minor moralities of life, Coleridge writes of his brother-in-law: "Always employed, his friends find him always at leisure. No less punctual in trifles than steadfast in the performance of highest duties, he inflicts none of those small pains which irregular men scatter about them, and which in the aggregate so often become formidable obstacles both to happiness and utility; while, on the contrary, he bestows all the pleasures and inspires all that ease of mind on those around or connected with him, which perfect consistency and (if such a word might be framed) absolute *reliability*, equally in small as in great concerns, cannot but inspire and bestow; when this, too, is softened without being weakened by kindness and gentleness." Odd indeed were some of the communications for which the poet-laureate, the Tory reformer, and the loyal son of the Church was the mark. Now a clergyman writes to furnish him with Scriptural illustrations of *Thalaba*; now another clergyman favors him with an ingenious parallel between Kehama and Nebuchadnezzar; now some anonymous person seriously urges on Southey his duty of making a new version of the Psalms, and laying it before the King to be approved and appointed to be sung in churches; now a lunatic poet desires his brother to procure for his title-page the names of Messrs. Longman and Rees; now a poor woman, wife to a blind Homer, would have him led carefully to the summit of Parnassus; now a poor French devil volunteers to translate *Roderick* if the author will have the goodness to send him a copy—even a defective copy—which he pledges himself religiously to return; now a Yankee, who keeps an exhibition at Philadelphia, modestly asks for Southey's painted portrait, "which is very worthy a place in my collection;" now a herdsman in the vale of Clwyd requests permission to send specimens of prose and verse—his highest ambition is the acquaintance of learned men; now the Rev. Peter Hall begs to inform Southey that he has done more harm to the cause of religion than any writer of the age; now a lover requests him to make an acrostic on the name of a young lady—the lover's rival has beaten him in writing verses; enclosed is the honorarium. Southey's amiability at this point gave way; he did not write the acrostic, and the money he spent on blankets for poor women in Keswick. A society for the suppression of albums was proposed by Southey; yet sometimes he was captured in the gracious mood. Samuel Simpson, of Liverpool, begs for a few lines in his handwriting "to fill a vacancy in his collection of autographs, without which his series must remain forever most incomplete." The laureate replies:

"Inasmuch as you, Sam, a descendant of Sim,
For collecting handwritings have taken a whim,
And to me, Robert Southey, petition have made,
In a civil and nicely-penned letter—post-paid—
That I to your album so gracious would be
As to fill up a page there appointed for me,
Five couplets I send you, by aid of the nine—
They will cost you in postage a penny a line:
At Keswick, October the sixth, they were done,
One thousand eight hundred and twenty and one."

Some of Southey's distractions were of his own inviting. Soon after his arrival at Keswick, a tiny volume of poems, entitled *Clifton Grove*, attracted his attention; its author was an undergraduate of Cambridge. The *Monthly Review* having made the discovery that it rhymed in one place *boy* and *sky*, dismissed the book contemptuously. Southey could not bear to think that the hopes of a lad of promise should be blasted, and he wrote to Henry Kirke White, encouraging him, and offering him help towards a future volume. The cruel dulness of the reviewer sat heavily on the poor boy's spirits, and these unexpected words of cheer came with most grateful effect. It soon appeared, however, that Southey's services must be slight, for his new acquaintance was taken out of his hands by Mr. Simeon, the nursing-father of Evangelicalism. At no time had Southey any leanings towards the Clapham Sect; and so, while he tried to be of use to Kirke White indirectly, their correspondence ceased. When the lad, in every way lacking pith and substance, and ripening prematurely in a heated atmosphere, drooped and died, Southey was not willing that he should be altogether forgotten; he wrote offering to look over whatever papers there might be, and to give an opinion on them. "Down came a boxful," he tells Duppa, "the sight of which literally made my heart ache and my eyes overflow, for never did I behold such proofs of human industry. To make short, I took the matter up with interest, collected his letters, and have, at the expense of more time than such a poor fellow as myself can very well afford, done what his family are very grateful for, and what I think the world will thank me for, too. Of course I have done it gratuitously. . . . That I should become, and that voluntarily, too, an editor of Methodistical and Calvinistic letters, is a thing which, when I think of, excites the same sort of smile that the thought of my pension does." A brief statement that his own views on religion differed widely from those of Kirke White sufficed to save Southey's integrity. The genius of the dead poet he overrated; it was an error which the world has since found time to correct.

This was but one of a series of many instances in which Southey, stemming the pressure of his own engagements, asserted the right to be generous of his time and strength and substance to those who had need of such help as a sound heart and a strong arm can give. William Roberts, a Bristol bank-clerk, dying of consumption at nineteen, left his only possession, some manuscript poems, in trust to be published for the benefit of a sister whom he passionately loved. Southey was consulted, and at once bestirred himself on behalf of the projected volume. Herbert Knowles, an orphan lad at school in Yorkshire, had hoped to go as a sizar to St. John's; his relations were unable to send him; could he help himself by publishing a poem? might he dedicate it to the laureate? The poem came to Southey, who found it "brimful of power and of promise;" he represented to Herbert the folly of publishing, promised ten pounds himself, and procured from Rogers and Earl Spencer twenty more. Herbert Knowles, in a wise and manly letter, begged that great things might not be expected of him; he would not be idle, his University career should be at least respectable: "Suffice it, then, to say, *I thank you from my heart*; let time and my future conduct tell the rest." Death came to arbitrate between his hopes and fears. James Dusautoy, another schoolboy, one of ten children of a retired officer, sent specimens of his verse, asking Southey's opinion on certain poetical plans. His friends thought the law the best profession for him; how could he make literature help him forward in his profession? Southey again advised against publication, but by a well-timed effort enabled him to enter Emanuel College. Dusautoy, after a brilliant promise, took fever, died, and was buried, in acknowledgment of his character and talents, in the college cloisters. When at Harrogate in the summer of 1827, Southey received a letter, written with much modesty and good feeling, from John Jones, an old serving-man; he inclosed a poem on "The Redbreast," and would take the liberty, if permitted, to offer other manuscripts for inspection. Touches of true observation and natural feeling in the verses on the little bird with "look oblique and prying head and gentle affability" pleased Southey, and he told his humble applicant to send his manuscript book, warning him, however, not to expect that such poems would please the public—"the time for them was gone by, and whether the public had grown wiser in these matters or not, it had certainly become less tolerant and less charitable." By procuring subscribers and himself contributing an Introductory Essay on the lives and works of our Uneducated Poets, Southey secured a slender fortune for the worthy old man, who laid the table none the less punctually because he loved Shakespere and the Psalter, or carried in his head some simple rhymes of his own. It pleased Southey to show how much intellectual pleasure and moral improvement connected with such pleasure are within reach of the humblest; thus a lesson was afforded to those who would have the March of Intellect beaten only to the tune of *Ça ira*. "Before I conclude"—so the Introduction draws to an end—"I must, in my own behalf, give notice to all whom it may concern that I, Robert Southey, Poet-laureate, being somewhat advanced in years, and having business enough of my own fully to occupy as much time as can be devoted to it, consistently with a due regard to health, do hereby decline perusing or inspecting any manuscript from any person whatsoever, and desire that no application on that score may be made to me from this time forth; this resolution, which for most just cause is taken and here notified, being, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, not to be changed."

It was some time after this public announcement that a hand, which may have trembled while yet it was very brave and resolute, dropped into the little post-office at Haworth, in Yorkshire, a packet for Robert Southey. His bold truthfulness, his masculine self-control, his strong heart, his domestic temper sweet and venerable, his purity of manners, a certain sweet austerity, attracted to him women of fine sensibility and genius who would fain escape from their own falterings and temerities under the authority of a faithful director. Already Maria del Occidente, "the most impassioned and most imaginative of all poetesses," had pored into his ear the tale of her slighted love. Newly come from Paris, and full of enthusiasm for the Poles, she hastened to Keswick to see in person her sympathetic adviser; she proved, says Southey, a most interesting person of the mildest and gentlest manners. With him she left, on returning to America, her *Zophiel* in manuscript, the publication of which he superintended. "*Zophiel*, Southey says, is by some Yankee woman"—Charles Lamb breaks forth—"as if there ever had been a woman capable of anything so great!" Now, in 1837, a woman of finer spirit, and capable of higher things than *Zophiel*, addressed a letter to Robert Southey, asking his judgment of her powers as disclosed in the poems which she forwarded. For some weeks Charlotte Brontë waited, until almost all hope of a reply was lost. At length the verdict came. Charlotte Brontë's verse was assuredly written with her left hand; her passionate impulses, crossed and checked by fiery fiats of the will, would not mould themselves into little stanzas; the little stanzas must be correct, therefore they must reject such irregular heavings and swift repressions of the heart. Southey's delay in replying had been caused by absence from home. A little personal knowledge of a poet in the decline of life might have tempered her enthusiasm; yet he is neither a disappointed nor a discontented man; she will never hear from him any chilling sermons on the text, All is vanity; the faculty of verse she possesses in no inconsiderable degree; but this, since the beginning of the century, has grown to be no rare possession; let her beware of making literature her profession, check day-dreams, and find her chief happiness in her womanly duties; then she may write poetry for its own sake, not in a spirit of emulation, not through a passion for celebrity; the less celebrity is aimed at, the more it is likely to be deserved. "Mr. Southey's letter," said Charlotte Brontë, many years later, "was kind and admirable, a little stringent, but it did me good." She wrote again, striving to repress a palpitating joy and pride in the submission to her director's counsel, and the sacrifice of her cherished hopes; telling him more of her daily life, of her obedience to the day's duty, her efforts to be sensible and sober: "I had not ventured," she says, "to hope for such a reply—so considerate in its tone, so noble in its spirit." Once more Southey wrote, hoping that she would let him see her at the Lakes: "You would then think of me afterwards with the more good-will, because you would perceive that there is neither severity nor moroseness in the state of mind to which years and observation have brought me. . . . And now, madam, God bless you. Farewell, and believe me to be your sincere friend, Robert Southey." It was during a visit to the

Lakes that Charlotte Brontë told her biographer of these letters. But Southey lay at rest in Crosthwaite churchyard.

"My days among the dead are past"—Southey wrote, but it is evident that the living, and not those of his own household alone, claimed no inconsiderable portion of his time. Indeed, it would not be untrue to assert that few men have been more genuinely and consistently social, that few men ever yielded themselves more constantly to the pleasures of companionship. But the society he loved best was that of old and chosen friends, or if new friends, one at a time, and only one. Next to romping with my children, he said, I enjoy a *tête-à-tête* conversation with an *old* friend or a *new*. "With one I can talk of familiar subjects which we have discussed in former years, and with the other, if he have any brains, I open what to me is a new mine of thought." Miscellaneous company to a certain extent disordered and intoxicated him. He felt no temptation to say a great deal, but he would often say things strongly and emphatically, which were better left unsaid. "In my hearty hatred of assentation I commit faults of the opposite kind. Now I am sure to find this out myself, and to get out of humor with myself; what prudence I have is not ready on demand; and so it is that the society of any except my friends, though it may be sweet in the mouth, is bitter in the belly." When Coleridge, in their arguments, allowed him a word, Southey made up in weight for what was wanting in measure; he saw one fact quickly, and darted at it like a greyhound. De Quincey has described his conversation as less flowing and expansive than that of Wordsworth—more apt to clothe itself in a keen, sparkling, aphoristic form; consequently sooner coming to an abrupt close; "the style of his mind naturally prompts him to adopt a trenchant, pungent, aculeated form of terse, glittering, stenographic sentences—sayings which have the air of laying down the law without any *locus penitentiæ* or privilege of appeal, but are not meant to do so." The same manner, tempered and chastened by years, can be recognized in the picture of Southey drawn by his friend Sir Henry Taylor:

> "The characteristics of his manner, as of his appearance, were lightness and strength, an easy and happy composure as the accustomed mood, and much mobility at the same time, so that he could be readily excited into any degree of animation in discourse, speaking, if the subject moved him much, with extraordinary fire and force, though always in light, laconic sentences. When so moved, the fingers of his right hand often rested against his mouth and quivered through nervous susceptibility. But excitable as he was in conversation, he was never angry or irritable; nor can there be any greater mistake concerning him than that into which some persons have fallen when they have inferred, from the fiery vehemence with which he could give utterance to moral anger in verse or prose, that he was personally ill-tempered or irascible. He was, in truth, a man whom it was hardly possible to quarrel with or offend personally, and face to face. . . . He was averse from argumentation, and would commonly quit a subject, when it was passing into that shape, with a quiet and good-humored indication of the view in which he rested. He talked most, and with most interest, about books and about public affairs; less, indeed hardly at all, about the characters and qualities of men in private life. In the society of strangers or of acquaintances, he seemed to take more interest in the

subjects spoken of than in the persons present, his manner being that of natural courtesy and general benevolence without distinction of individuals. Had there been some tincture of social vanity in him, perhaps he would have been brought into closer relations with those whom he met in society; but though invariably kind and careful of their feelings, he was indifferent to the manner in which they regarded him, or (as the phrase is) to his *effect* in society; and they might, perhaps, be conscious that the kindness they received was what flowed naturally and inevitably to all, that they had nothing to give in return which was of value to him, and that no individual relations were established."

How deep and rich Southey's social nature was, his published correspondence, some four or five thousand printed pages, tells sufficiently. These letters, addressed, for the most part, to good old friends, are indeed genial, liberal of sympathy, and expecting sympathy in return; pleasantly egotistic, grave, playful, wise, pathetic, with a kind of stringent pathos showing through checks imposed by the wiser and stronger will. Southey did not squander abroad the treasures of his affection. To lavish upon casual acquaintance the outward and visible signs of friendship seemed to him a profaning of the mystery of manly love. "Your feelings," he writes to Coleridge, "go naked; I cover mine with a bear-skin; I will not say that you harden yours by your mode, but I am sure that mine are the warmer for their clothing." With strangers a certain neutral courtesy served to protect his inner self like the low leaves of his own holly-tree:

"Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen
Wrinkled and keen;
No grazing cattle through their prickly round
Can reach to wound;"

but to those of whose goodness and love he was well assured, there were no protecting spines:

"Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be,
Like the high leaves upon the Holly-tree."

Old friends and old books," he says, "are the best things that this world affords (I like old wine also), and in these I am richer than most men (the wine excepted)." In the group of Southey's friends, what first strikes one is, not that they are men of genius—although the group includes Wordsworth, and Scott, and Henry Taylor—but that they are good men. No one believed more thoroughly than Southey that goodness is a better thing than genius; yet he required in his associates some high excellence, extraordinary kindness of disposition, or strength of moral character, if not extraordinary intellect. To knit his friends in a circle was his ardent desire; in the strength of his affections time and distance made no change. An old College friend, Lightfoot, to visit Southey, made the longest journey of his life; it was eight-and-twenty years since they had met. When their hands touched, Lightfoot trembled like an aspen-leaf. "I believe," says Southey, "no men ever met more cordially after so long a separation, or enjoyed each other's society more. I shall never forget the manner in which he first met me, nor the tone in which he said 'that, having now seen me, he should return home and die in peace.'" But of all friends he was most at ease with his dear Dapple, Grosvenor Bedford, who suited for every mood of mirth and sorrow. When Mrs. Southey had fallen into her sad decay, and the once joyous house was melancholy and silent, Southey turned for comfort to Bedford. Still, some of their Rabelaisian humor remained, and all their warmth of brotherly affection. "My father," says Cuthbert Southey, "was never tired of talking into Mr. Bedford's trumpet." And in more joyous days, what noise and nonsense did they not make! "Oh! Grosvenor," exclaims Southey, "is it not a pity that two men who love nonsense so cordially and naturally and *bonâfidically* as you and I, should be three hundred miles asunder? For my part, I insist upon it that there is no sense so good as your honest, genuine nonsense."

A goodly company of friends becomes familiar to us as we read Southey's correspondence: Wynn, wherever he was, "always doing something else," yet able, in the midst of politics and business, to find time to serve an old schoolfellow; Rickman, full of practical suggestions, and accurate knowledge and robust benevolence; John May, unfailing in kindness and fidelity; Lamb for play and pathos, and subtle criticism glancing amid the puns; William Taylor for culture and literary theory, and paradox and polysyllables; Landor for generous admiration, and kindred enthusiasms and kindred prejudices; Elmsley, and Lightfoot, and Danvers for love and happy memories; Senhora Barker, the Bhow Begum, for frank familiarities, and warm, womanly services; Caroline Bowles for rarer sympathy and sacreder hopes and fears; Henry Taylor for spiritual sonship, as of a son who is also an equal; and Grosvenor Bedford for everything great and small, glad and sad, wise and foolish.

No literary rivalries or jealousies ever interrupted for a moment any friendship of Southey. Political and religious differences, which in strangers were causes of grave offence, seemed to melt away when the heretic or erring statist was a friend. But if success, fashion, flattery tested a man, and proved him wanting, as seemed to be the case with Humphry Davy, his affection grew cold; and an habitual dereliction of social duty, such as that of Coleridge, could not but transform Southey's feeling of love to one of condemning sorrow. To his great contemporaries, Scott, Landor, Wordsworth, his admiration was freely given. "Scott," he writes, "is very ill. He suffers dreadfully, but bears his sufferings with admirable equanimity. . . . God grant that he may recover! He is a noble and generous-hearted creature, whose like we shall not look upon again." Of Wordsworth: "A greater poet than Wordsworth there never has been, nor ever will be." "Two or three generations must pass before the public affect to admire such poets as Milton and Wordsworth. Of such men the world scarcely produces one in a millennium." With indignation crossed by a gleam of humor, he learnt that Ebenezer Elliott, his pupil in the art of verse, had stepped forward as the lyrist of radicalism; but the feeling could not be altogether anger with which he remembered that earnest face, once seen by him at a Sheffield inn, its pale gray eyes full of fire and meaning, its expression suiting well with Elliott's frankness of manner and simplicity of character. William Taylor was one of the liberals of liberal Norwich, and dangled abroad whatever happened to be the newest paradox in religion. But neither his radicalism, nor his Pyrrhonism, nor his paradoxes, could estrange Southey. The last time the oddly-assorted pair met was in Taylor's house; the student of German criticism had found some theological novelty, and wished to draw his guest into argument; Southey parried the thrusts good-humoredly, and at last put an end to them with the words, "Taylor, come and see me at Keswick. We will ascend Skiddaw, where I shall have you nearer heaven, and we will then discuss such questions as these."

In the year 1823 one of his oldest friends made a public attack on Southey, and that friend, the gentlest and sweetest-natured of them all. In a *Quarterly* article Southey had spoken of the Essays of Elia as a book which wanted only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it was original. He had intended to alter the expression in the proof-sheet, but no proof-sheet was ever sent. Lamb, already pained by references to his writings in the *Quarterly*, some of which he erroneously ascribed to Southey, was deeply wounded. "He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights that meant no harm to religion." A long expostulation addressed by Elia to Robert Southey, Esq., appeared in the *London Magazine* for October, only a portion of which is retained in the Elia Essays under the title of "The Tombs of the Abbey;" for though Lamb had playfully resented Coleridge's salutation, "my gentle-hearted Charles," his heart was indeed gentle, and could not endure the pain of its own wrath; among the memorials of the dead in Westminster he finds his right mind, his truer self, once more; he forgets the grave aspect with which Southey looked awful on his poor friend, and spends his indignation harmless as summer lightning over the heads of a Dean and Chapter. Southey, seeing the announcement of a letter addressed to him by Lamb, had expected a sheaf of friendly pleasantries; with surprise he learnt what pain his words had caused. He hastened to explain; had Lamb intimated his feelings in private, he would have tried, by a passage in the ensuing *Quarterly*, to efface the impression unhappily created; he ended with a declaration of unchanged affection, and a proposal to call on Lamb. "On my part," Southey said, "there was not even a momentary feeling of anger;" he at once understood the love, the error, the soreness, and the repentance awaiting a being so composed of goodness as Elia. "Dear Southey"—runs the answer of Lamb—"the kindness of your note has melted away the mist that was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. . . . I wish both magazine and review were at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so, for this folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at the time. I will make up courage to see you, however, any day next week. We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification; she will hate to see us; but come and heap embers; we deserve it, I for what I have done, and she for being my sister. Do come early in the day, by sunlight, that you may see my Milton. . . . Your penitent C. Lamb."

At Bristol, in 1808, Southey met for the first time the man of all others whom he most desired to see, the only man living, he says, "of whose praise he was ambitious, or whose censure would have humbled me." This was Walter Savage Landor. *Madoc*, on which Southey had built his hope of renown as a poet, had been published, and had been coldly received; *Kehama*, which had been begun, consequently now stood still. Their author could indeed, as he told Sir George Beaumont, be contented with posthumous fame, but it was impossible to be contented with posthumous bread and cheese. "St. Cecilia herself could not have played the organ if there had been nobody to blow the bellows for her." At this moment, when he turned sadly and bravely from poetry to more profitable work, he first looked on Landor. "I never saw any one more unlike myself," he writes, "in every prominent part of human character, nor any one who so cordially and instinctively agreed with me on so many of the most important subjects. I have often said before we met, that I would walk forty miles to see him, and having seen him, I would gladly walk fourscore to see him again. He talked of *Thalaba*, and I told him of the series of mythological poems which I had planned, . . . and also told him for what reason they had been laid aside; in plain English, that I could not afford to write them. Landor's reply was, 'Go on with them, and I will pay for printing them, as many as you will write, and as many copies as you please.'" The princely offer stung Southey, as he says, to the very core; not that he thought of accepting that offer, but the generous words were themselves a deed, and claimed a return. He rose earlier each morning to carry on his *Kehama*, without abstracting time from better-paid task-work; it advanced, and duly as each section of this poem, and subsequently of his *Roderick*, came to be written, it was transcribed for the friend whose sympathy and admiration were a golden reward. To be praised by one's peers is indeed happiness. Landor, liberal of applause, was keen in suggestion and exact in censure. Both friends were men of ardent feelings, though one had tamed himself, while the other never could be tamed; both often gave their feelings a vehement utterance. On many matters they thought, in the main, alike—on the grand style in human conduct, on the principles of the poetic art, on Spanish affairs, on Catholicism. The secret of Landor's high-poised dignity in verse had been discovered by Southey; he, like Landor, aimed at a classical purity of diction; he, like Landor, loved, as a shaper of imaginative forms, to embody in an act, or an incident, the virtue of some eminent moment of human passion, and to give it fixity by sculptured phrase; only the repression of a fiery spirit is more apparent in Landor's monumental lines than in Southey's. With certain organic resemblances, and much community of sentiment, there were large differences between the two, so that when they were drawn together in sympathy, each felt as if he had annexed a new province. Landor rejoiced that the first persons who shared his turret at Llanthony were Southey and his wife; again, in 1817, the two friends were together for three days at Como, after Southey had endured his prime affliction—the death of his son:

> "Grief had swept over him; days darkened round;
> Bellagio, Valintelvi smiled in vain,
> And Monte Rosa from Helvetia far
> Advanced to meet us, wild in majesty
> Above the glittering crests of giant sons
> Station'd around . . . in vain too! all in vain."

Two years later the warm-hearted friend writes from Pistoia, rejoicing in Southey's joy: "Thank God! Tears came into my eyes on seeing that you were blessed with a son." To watch the happiness of children was Landor's highest delight; to share in such happiness was Southey's; and Arnold and Cuthbert formed a new bond between their fathers. In 1836, when Southey, in his sixty-third year, guided his son through the scenes of his boyhood, several delightful days were spent at Clifton with Landor. I never knew a man of brighter genius or of kinder heart, said Southey; and of Landor in earlier years: "He does more than any of the gods of all my mythologies, for his very words are thunder and lightning—such is the power and splendor with which they burst out." Landor responded with a majestic enthusiasm about his friend, who seemed to him no less noble a man than admirable a writer:

> "No firmer breast than thine hath Heaven
> To poet, sage, or hero given:
> No heart more tender, none more just,
> To that He largely placed in trust:
> Therefore shalt thou, whatever date
> Of years be thine, with soul elate
> Rise up before the Eternal throne,
> And hear, in God's own voice, 'Well done!'"

That "Well done" greeted Southey many years before Landor's imperial head was laid low. In the last letter from his friend received by Southey—already the darkness was fast closing in—he writes, "If any man living is ardent for your welfare, I am; whose few and almost worthless merits your generous heart has always overvalued, and whose infinite and great faults it has been too ready to overlook. I will write to you often, now I learn that I may do it inoffensively; well remembering that among the names you have exalted is Walter Landor." Alas! to reply was now beyond the power of Southey; still, he held *Gebir* in his hands oftener than any other volume of poetry, and, while thought and feeling lived, fed upon its beauty. "It is very seldom now," Caroline Southey wrote at a later date, "that he ever names any person: but this morning, before he left his bed, I heard him repeating softly to himself, *Landor, ay, Landor.*"

"If it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all"—this was ever present to Southey during the happy days of labor and rest in Greta Hall. While he was disposing his books so as to make the comeliest show, and delighting in their goodly ranks; while he looked into the radiant faces of his children, and loved their innocent brightness, he yet knew that the day of detachment was approaching. There was nothing in such a thought which stirred Southey to a rebellious mood; had he not set his seal to the bond of life? How his heart rested in his home, only his own words can tell; even a journey to London seemed too long: "Oh dear; oh dear! there is such a comfort in one's old coat and old shoes, one's own chair and own fireside, one's own writing-desk and own library—with a little girl climbing up to my neck, and saying, 'Don't go to London, papa—you must stay with Edith;' and a little boy, whom I have taught to speak the language of cats, dogs, cuckoos, and jackasses, etc., before he can articulate a word of his own—there is such a comfort in all these things, that *transportation* to London for four or five weeks seems a heavier punishment than any sins of mine deserve." Nor did his spirit of boyish merriment abate until overwhelming sorrow weighed him down: "I am quite as noisy as I ever was," he writes to Lightfoot, "and should take as much delight as ever in showering stones through the hole of the staircase against your room door, and hearing with what hearty good earnest 'you fool' was vociferated in indignation against me in return. Oh, dear Lightfoot, what a blessing it is to have a boy's heart! it is as great a blessing in carrying one through this world, as to have a child's spirit will be in fitting us for the next." But Southey's lightheartedness was rounded by a circle of earnest acquiescence in the law of mortal life; a clear-obscure of faith as pure and calm and grave as the heavens of a midsummer night. At thirty he writes: "No man was ever more contented with his lot than I am, for few have ever had more enjoyments, and none had ever better or worthier hopes. Life, therefore, is sufficiently dear to me, and long life desirable, that I may accomplish all which I design. But yet I could be well content that the next century were over, and my part fairly at an end, having been gone well through. Just as at school one wished the school-days over, though we were happy enough there, because we expected more happiness and more liberty when we were to be our own masters, might lie as much later in the morning as we pleased, have no bounds and do no exercise—just so do I wish that my exercises were over." At thirty-five: "Almost the only wish I ever give utterance to is that the next hundred years were over. It is not that the uses of this world seem to me weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable —God knows far otherwise! No man can be better contented with his lot. My paths are paths of pleasantness. . . . Still, the instability of human happiness is ever before my eyes; I long for the certain and the permanent." "My notions about life are much the same as they are about travelling—there is a good deal of amusement on the road, but, after all, one wants to be at rest." At forty: "My disposition is invincibly cheerful, and this alone would make me a cheerful man if I were not so from the tenor of my life; yet I doubt whether the strictest Carthusian has the thought of death more habitually in his mind."

Such was Southey's constant temper: to some persons it may seem an unfortunate one; to some it may be practically unintelligible. But those who accept of the feast of life freely, who enter with a bounding foot its measures of beauty and of joy—glad to feel all the while the serviceable sackcloth next the skin—will recognize in Southey an instructed brother of the Renunciants' rule.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGES AND EVENTS, 1803—1843.

IN October, 1805, Southey started with his friend Elmsley for a short tour in Scotland. On their way northward they stopped three days at Ashestiel. There, in a small house, rising amid its old-fashioned garden, with pastoral hills all around, and the Tweed winding at the meadow's end, lived Walter Scott. It was the year in which old Border song had waked up, with ampler echoings, in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and Scott was already famous. Earlier in the year he had visited Grasmere, and had stood upon the summit of Helvellyn, with Wordsworth and Davy by his side. The three October days, with their still, misty brightness, went by in full enjoyment. Southey had brought with him a manuscript containing sundry metrical romances of the fifteenth century, on which his host pored, as far as courtesy and the hours allowed, with much delight; and the guests saw Melrose, that old romance in stone so dear to Scott, went salmon-spearing on the Tweed, dined on a hare snapped up before their eyes by Percy and Douglas, and visited Yarrow. From Ashestiel they proceeded to Edinburgh. Southey looked coldly on the gray metropolis;

its new city seemed a kind of Puritan Bath, which worshipped propriety instead of pleasure; but the old town, seen amid the slant light of a wild, red sunset, impressed him much, its vast irregular outline of roofs and chimneys rising against tumultuous clouds like the dismantled fragments of a giant's palace. Southey was prepared to find himself and his friends of the lakes persons of higher stature than the Scotch *literatuli*. Before accepting an invitation to meet him at supper, Jeffrey politely forwarded the proof of an unpublished review of *Madoc*; if the poet preferred that his reviewer should not present himself, Mr. Jeffrey would deny himself the pleasure of Mr. Southey's acquaintance. Southey was not to be daunted, and, as he tells it himself, felt nothing but good-humor on beholding a bright-faced homunculus of five-foot-one, the centre of an attentive circle, ēēnunciating with North-British ēēlocution his doctrines on taste. The lively little gentleman, who thought to crush *The Excursion*—he could as easily crush Skiddaw, said Southey—received from the author of *Madoc* a courtesy *de haut en bas* intended to bring home to his consciousness the fact that he was—but five-foot-one. The bland lips of the gods who looked down on Auld Reekie that evening smiled at the magnanimity alike of poet and critic.

Two years later (1807), differences having arisen between the proprietors and the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, it was in contemplation to alter the management, and Longman wrote requesting Southey to review him two or three articles "in his best manner." Southey did not keep firkins of criticism of first and second brand, but he was not unwilling to receive ten guineas a sheet instead of seven pounds. When, however, six months later, Scott urged his friend to contribute, Judge Jeffrey still sat on the bench of the *Edinburgh Review*, hanging, drawing, and quartering luckless poets with undiminished vivacity. It was of no use for Scott to assure Southey that the homunculus, notwithstanding his flippant attacks on *Madoc* and *Thalaba*, had the most sincere respect for their author and his talents. Setting all personal feelings aside, an irreconcilable difference, Southey declared, between Jeffrey and himself upon every great principle of taste, morality, and policy, occasioned a difficulty which could not be removed. Within less than twelve months Scott, alienated by the deepening Whiggery of the *Review*, and by more personal causes, had ceased to contribute, and opposite his name in the list of subscribers Constable had written, with indignant notes of exclamation, "*Stopt!!!*" John Murray, the young bookseller in Fleet Street, had been to Ashestiel; in "dern privacie" a bold complot was laid; why should the Edinburgh clique carry it before them? The spirit of England was still sound, and would respond to loyalty, patriotism, the good traditions of Church and State, the temper of gentlemen, courage, scholarship; Gifford, of the Anti-Jacobin, had surely a sturdier arm than Jeffrey; George Ellis would remember his swashing-blow; there were the Roses, and Matthias, and Heber; a rival *Review* should see the light, and that speedily; "a good plot, good friends, and full of expectation—an excellent plot, very good friends."

Southey was invited to write on Spanish affairs for the first number of the *Quarterly* (February, 1809). His political opinions had undergone a considerable alteration since the days of Pantisocracy and *Joan of Arc*. The Reign of Terror had not caused a violent reaction against the doctrine of a republic, nor did he soon cease to sympathize with France. But his hopes were dashed; it was plain that "the millennium would not come this bout." Man as he is appeared more greedy, ignorant, and dangerous than he had appeared before, though man as he may be was still a being composed of knowledge, virtue, and love. The ideal republic receded into the dimness of unborn time; no doubt—so Southey maintained to the end—a republic is the best form of government in itself, as a sun-dial is simpler and surer than a time-piece; but the sun of reason does not always shine, and therefore complicated systems of government, containing checks and counterchecks, are needful in old countries for the present; better systems are no doubt conceivable—for better men. "Mr. Southey's mind," wrote Hazlitt, "is essentially sanguine, even to overweeningness. It is prophetic of good; it cordially embraces it; it casts a longing, lingering look after it, even when it is gone forever. He cannot bear to give up the thought of happinness, his confidence in his fellow-men, when all else despair. It is the very element 'where he must live or have no life at all.'" This is true; we sacrifice too much to prudence—Southey said, when not far from sixty—and in fear of incurring the danger or the reproach of enthusiasm, too often we stifle the holiest impulses of the understanding and the heart. Still, at sixty he believed in a state of society actually to be realized as superior to English society in the nineteenth century, as that itself is superior to the condition of the tattooed Britons, or of the Northern Pirates from whom we have descended. But the error of supposing such a state of society too near, of fancying that there is a short road to it, seemed to him a pernicious error, seducing the young and generous into an alliance with whatever is flagitious and detestable.

It was not until the Peace of Amiens (1802) that Southey was restored in feeling to his own country. From that hour the new departure in his politics may be said to date. The honor of England became as dear to him as to her most patriotic son; and in the man who had subjugated the Swiss Republic, and thrown into a dungeon the champion of Negro independence, and slaughtered his prisoners at Jaffa, he indignantly refused to recognize the representative of the generous principles of 1789. To him, as to Wordsworth, the very life of virtue in mankind seemed to dwell in the struggle against the military despotism which threatened to overwhelm the whole civilized world. Whatever went along with a spirited war-policy Southey could accept. It appeared to himself that his views and hopes had changed precisely because the heart and soul of his wishes had continued the same. To remove the obstacles which retard the improvement of mankind was the one object to which, first and last, he gave his most earnest vows. "This has been the pole-star of my course; the needle has shifted according to the movements of the state vessel wherein I am embarked, but the direction to which it points has always been the same. I did not fall into the error of those who, having been the friends of France when they imagined that the cause of liberty was implicated in her success, transferred their attachment from the Republic to the Military Tyranny in which it ended, and regarded with complacency the progress of oppression because France was the oppressor. 'They had turned their faces toward the East in the morning to worship the rising sun, and in the evening they were looking eastward, obstinately affirming that still the sun was there.' I, on the contrary, altered my position as the world went round."*

Wordsworth has described in memorable words the sudden exaltation of the spirit of resistance to Napoleon, its change from the temper of fortitude to enthusiasm, animated by hope, when the Spanish people rose against their oppressors. "From that moment," he says, "this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality." Southey had learned to love the people of the Peninsula; he had almost naturalized himself among them by his studies of Spanish and Portuguese history and literature. Now there was in him a new birth of passion at a period of life when ordinarily the crust of custom begins to incase our free spirits. All his moral ardor flowed in the same current with his political enthusiasm; in this war there was as direct a contest between the principles of evil and good as the elder Persians or the Manicheans imagined in their fables. "Since the stirring day of the French Revolution," he writes to John May, "I have never felt half so much excitement in political events as the present state of Spain has given me." Little as he liked to leave home, if the Spaniards would bury their crown and sceptre, he would gird up his loins and assist at the ceremony, devout as every pilgrim at Compostella. A federal republic which should unite the Peninsula, and allow the internal governments to remain distinct, was what Southey ardently desired. When news came of the Convention of Cintra (1808), the poet, ordinarily so punctual a sleeper, lay awake all night; since the execution of the Brissotines no public event distressed him so deeply. "How gravely and earnestly used Samuel Taylor Coleridge"—so writes Coleridge's daughter—"and William Wordsworth and my uncle Southey also, to discuss the affairs of the nation, as if it all came home to their business and bosoms, as if it were their private concern! Men do not canvass these matters nowadays, I think, quite in the same tone."

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* The words quoted by Southey are his own, written in 1809.

That faith in the ultimate triumph of good which sustains Southey's heroine against the persecution of the Almighty Rajah, sustained Southey himself during the long struggle with Napoleon. A military despotism youthful and full of vigor, he said, must beat down corrupt establishments and worn-out governments; but how can it beat down forever a true love of liberty and a true spirit of patriotism? When at last tidings reached Keswick that the Allies were in Paris, Southey's feelings were such as he had never experienced before. "The curtain had fallen after a tragedy of five-and-twenty years." The hopes, and the ardors, and the errors, and the struggles of his early life crowded upon his mind; all things seemed to have worked together for good. He rejoiced that the whirlwind of revolution had cleared away the pestilence of the old governments; he rejoiced that right had conquered might. He did not wish to see the bad Bourbon race restored, except to complete Bonaparte's overthrow. And he feared lest an evil peace should be made. Paris taken, a commanding intellect might have cast Europe into whatever mould it pleased "The first business," says Southey, with remarkable prevision, "should have been to have reduced France to what she was before Louis XIV.'s time; the second, to have created a great power in the North of Germany, with Prussia at its head; the third, to have consolidated Italy into one kingdom or commonwealth."

The politicians of the *Edinburgh Review* had predicted ruin for all who dared to oppose the Corsican; they ridiculed the romantic hopes of the English nation; the fate of Spain, they declared in 1810, was decided; it would be cruel, they said, to foment petty insurrections: France had conquered Europe. It was this policy of despair which roused Scott and Southey. "We shall hoist the bloody flag," writes the latter, "down alongside that Scotch ship, and engage her yard-arm to yard-arm." But at first Southey, by his own request, was put upon other work than that of firing off the heavy *Quarterly* guns. Probably no man in England had read so many books of travel; these he could review better, he believed, than anything else; biography and history were also within his reach; with English poetry, from Spenser onwards, his acquaintance was wide and minute, but he took no pleasure in sitting in judgment on his contemporaries; his knowledge of the literary history of Spain and Portugal was a speciality, which, as often as the readers of the *Review* could bear with it, might be brought into use. Two things he could promise without fail—perfect sincerity in what he might write, without the slightest pretension of knowledge which he did not possess, and a punctuality not to be exceeded by Mr. Murray's opposite neighbor, the clock of St. Dunstan's.

Southey's essays—literary, biographical, historical, and miscellaneous—would probably now exist in a collected form, and constitute a storehouse of information—information often obtained with difficulty, and always conveyed in a lucid and happy style—were it not that he chose, on the eve of the Reform Bill, to earn whatever unpopularity he could by collecting his essays on political and social subjects. Affairs had hurried forward with eager strides; these *Quarterly* articles seemed already far behind, and might safely be left to take a quiet corner in Time's wallet among the alms for oblivion. Yet Southey's political articles had been effective in their day, and have still a value by no means wholly antiquarian. His home politics had been, in the main, determined by his convictions on the great European questions. There was a party of revolution in this country eager to break with the past, ready to venture every experiment for a future of mere surmise. Southey believed that the moral sense of the English people, their regard for conduct, would do much to preserve them from lawless excess; still, the lesson read by recent history was that order once overthrown, anarchy follows, to be itself quelled by the lordship of the sword. Rights, however, were pleaded—shall we refuse to any man the rights of a man? "Therapeutics," says Southey, "were in a miserable state as long as practitioners proceeded upon the gratuitous theory of elementary complexions; . . . natural philosophy was no better, being a mere farrago of romance, founded upon idle tales or fanciful conjectures, not upon observation and experiment. The science of politics is just now in the same stage; it has been erected by shallow sophists upon abstract rights and imaginary compacts, without the slightest reference to habits and history." "Order and improvement" were the words inscribed on Southey's banner. Order, that England might not fall, as France had fallen, into the hands of a military savior of society; order, that she might be in a condition to wage her great feud on behalf of freedom with undivided energy. Order, therefore, first; not by repression alone—though there were a time and a place for repression also—but order with improvement as a portion of its very life and being. Southey was a poet and a moralist, and judged of the well-being of a people by other than material standards; the wealth of nations seemed to him something other and higher than can be ascertained by wages and prices, rent and revenue, exports and imports. "True it is," he writes, "the ground is more highly cultivated, the crooked hedge-rows have been thrown down, the fields are in better shape and of handsomer dimensions, the plough makes longer furrows, there is more corn and fewer weeds; but look at the noblest produce of the earth—look at the children of the soil, look at the seeds which are sown here for immortality!" "The system which produces the happiest moral effects will be found the most beneficial to the interest of the individual and the general weal; upon this basis the science of political economy will rest at last, when the ponderous volumes with which it has been overlaid shall have sunk by their own weight into the dead sea of oblivion." Looking about him, he asked, What do the English people chiefly need? More wealth? It may be so; but rather wisdom to use the wealth they have. More votes? Yes, hereafter; but first the light of knowledge, that men may see how to use a vote. Even the visible beauty and grace of life seemed to Southey a precious thing, the loss of which might be set over against some gain in pounds, shillings, and pence. The bleak walls and barrack-like windows of a manufactory, the long, unlovely row of operatives' dwellings, struck a chill into his heart. He contrasts the old cottages substantially built of native stone, mellowed by time, taken by nature to herself with a mother's fondness, the rose-bushes beside the door, the little patch of flower-garden—he contrasts these with the bald deformities in which the hands of a great mill are stalled.

Before all else, national education appeared to Southey to be the need of England. He saw a great population growing up with eager appetites, and consciousness of augmented power. Whence were moral thoughtfulness and self-restraint to come? Not, surely, from the triumph of liberal opinions; not from the power to read every incentive to vice and sedition; nor from Religious Tract Societies nor from the portentous bibliolatry of the Evangelical party. But there is an education which at once enlightens the understanding and trains the conscience and the will. And there is that great association for making men good—the Church of England. Connect the two—education and the Church; the progress of enlightenment, virtue, and piety, however gradual, will be sure. Subordinate to this primary measure of reform, national education, many other measures were advocated by Southey. He looked forward to a time when, the great struggle respecting property over—for this struggle he saw looming not far off—public opinion will no more tolerate the extreme of poverty in a large class of the people than it now tolerates slavery in Europe; when the aggregation of land in the hands of great owners must cease, when that community of lands, which Owen of Lanark would too soon anticipate, might actually be realized. But these things were, perhaps, far off. Meanwhile how to bring nearer the golden age? Southey's son has made out a long list of the measures urged upon the English people in the *Quarterly Review*, or elsewhere, by his father. Bearing in mind that the proposer of these measures resisted the Reform Bill, Free Trade, and Catholic Emancipation, any one curious in such things may determine with what political label he should be designated: National education; the diffusion of cheap and good literature; a well-organized system of colonization, and especially of female emigration;* a wholesome training for the children of misery and vice in great cities; the establishment of Protestant sisters of charity, and a better order of hospital nurses; the establishment of savings-banks in all small towns; the abolition of flogging in the army and navy, except in extreme cases; improvements in the poor laws; alterations in the game-laws; alterations in the criminal laws, as inflicting the punishment of death in far too many cases; execution of criminals within prison walls; alterations in the factory system for the benefit of the operative, and especially as to the employment of children; national works—reproductive if possible—to be undertaken in times of peculiar distress; the necessity of doing away with interments in crowded cities; the system of giving allotments of ground to laborers; the employment of paupers in cultivating waste lands; the commutation of tithes; and last, the need for more clergymen, more colleges, more courts of law.

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* "With the Cape and New Holland I would proceed thus: 'Govern yourselves, and we will protect you as long as you need protection; when that is no longer necessary, remember that though we be different countries, each independent, we are one people.'"—R. S. to W. S. Landor. Letters, vol. ii. p. 263.

"Mr. Southey," said Hazlitt, "missed his way in Utopia; he has found it at old Sarum." To one of Southey's temper old Sarum seemed good, with its ordered freedom, its serious aspiration, its habitual pieties, its reasonable service, its reverent history, its beauty of holiness, its close where priests who are husbands and fathers live out their calm, benignant lives—its amiable home for those whose toil is ended, and who now sleep well. But how Southey found his way from his early deism to Anglican orthodoxy cannot be precisely determined. Certainly not for many years could he have made that subscription to the Articles of the Church of England, which at the first barred his way to taking orders. The superstition, which seemed to be the chief spiritual food of Spain, had left Southey, for the rest of his life, a resolute opponent of Catholicism; and as he read lives of the Saints and histories of the Orders, the exclamation, "I do well to be angry," was often on his lips. For the wisdom, learning, and devotion of the Jesuits he had, however, a just respect. Geneva, with its grim logic and stark spirituality, suited nerves of a different temper from his. For a time Southey thought himself half a Quaker, but he desired more visible beauty and more historical charm than he could find in Quakerism. Needing a comely home for his spiritual affections, he found precisely what pleased him built in the pleasant Anglican close. With growing loyalty to the State, his loyalty to the Church could not but keep pace. He loved her tolerance, her culture; he fed upon her judicious and learned writers—Taylor, with his bright fancies like the little rings of the vine; South, hitting out straight from the shoulder at anarchy, fanaticism, and licentiousness, as Southey himself would have liked to hit; Jackson, whose weight of character made his pages precious as with golden bullion. After all, old Sarum had some advantages over Utopia.

The English Constitution consisting of Church and State, it seemed to Southey an absurdity in politics to give those persons power in the State whose duty it is to subvert the Church. Admit Catholics, he said, to every office of trust, emolument, or honor; only never admit them into Parliament. "The arguments about equal rights are fit only for a schoolboy's declamation; it may as well be said that the Jew has a right to be a bishop or the Quaker an admiral, as that the Roman Catholic has a right to a seat in the British Legislature; his opinions disqualify him." To call this a question of toleration was impudence; Catholics were free to practise the rites of their religion; they had the full and free use of the press; perfect toleration was granted to the members of that church, which, wherever dominant, tolerates no other. Catholic Emancipation would not conciliate Ireland; the great source of Irish misery had been not England's power, but her weakness, and those violences to which weakness resorts in self-defence; old sores were not to be healed by the admission of Catholic demagogues into Parliament. The measure styled Emancipation would assuredly be followed by the downfall of the Protestant Establishment in Ireland, and by the spread of Catholicism in English society. To Pyrrhonists one form of faith might seem as good or as bad as the other; but the great mass of the English people had not advanced so far in the march of intellect as to perceive no important difference between Catholic and Protestant doctrine, or between Catholic and Protestant morality. By every possible means, better the condition of the Irish peasantry; give them employment in public works; facilitate, for those who desire it, the means of emigration; extend the poor-laws to Ireland, and lay that impost on absentees in such a proportion as may compensate, in some degree, for their non-residence; educate the people; execute justice and maintain peace, and the cry of Catholic Emancipation may be safely disregarded.

So Southey pleaded in the *Quarterly Review.* With reference to Emancipation and to the Reform Bill. he and Wordsworth—who, perhaps, had not kept themselves sufficiently in relation with living men and the public sentiment of the day—were in their solitude gifted with a measure of the prophetic spirit, which in some degree explains their alarms. For the prophet who knows little of expediency and nothing of the manipulation of parties, nothing of the tangled skein of contending interests, sees the future in its moral causes, and he sees it in a vision. But he cannot date the appearances in his vision. Battle, and garments rolled in blood, and trouble, and dimness of anguish pass before him, and he proclaims what it is given him to see. It matters not a little, however, in the actual event, whether the battle be on the morrow or half a century hence; and the prophet furnishes us with no chronology, or at best with some vague time and times and half a time. New forces have arisen before the terrors of his prediction come to pass, and, therefore, when they come to pass, their effect is often altogether different from that anticipated. Wordsworth and Southey were right in declaring that a vast and formidable change was taking place in the England of their day: many things which they, amid incredulous scoffs, announced, have become actual; others remain to be fulfilled. But the events have taken up their place in an order of things foreign to the conceptions of the prophets; the fire from heaven descends, but meanwhile we, ingenious sons of men have set up a lightning-conductor.

Southey and the *Quarterly Review* were often spoken of as a single entity. But the *Review*, in truth, never precisely represented his feelings and convictions. With Gifford he had no literary sympathies. Gifford's heart was full of kindness, says Southey, for all living creatures except authors; *them* he regarded as Isaac Walton did the worm. Against the indulgence of that temper Southey always protested; yet he was chosen to bear the reproach of having tortured Keats, and of having anonymously glorified himself at the expense of Shelley. Gifford's omissions, additions, substitutions, often caused Southey's article in the *Review* to be very unlike the article which he had despatched to the editor in manuscript. Probably these changes were often made on warrantable grounds. Southey's confidence in his own opinions, which always seemed to him to be based upon moral principles, was high; and he was not in the habit of diluting his ink. Phrases which sounded well in the library of Greta Hall had quite another sound in Mr. Murray's office in Fleet Street.

On arriving in London for a short visit in the autumn of 1813, Southey learnt that the Prince Regent wished to confer on him the Laureateship, vacant by the death of Pye. Without consulting the Regent, Lord Liverpool had previously directed that the office should be offered to Walter Scott. On the moment came a letter from Scott informing Southey that he had declined the appointment, not from any foolish prejudice against holding it, but because he was already provided for, and would not engross emoluments which ought to be awarded to a man of letters who had no other views in life. Southey hesitated, having ceased for several years to produce occasional verses; but his friend Croker assured him that he would not be compelled to write odes as boys write exercises at stated times on stated subjects; that it would suffice if he wrote on great public events, or did not write, as the spirit moved him; and thus his scruples were overcome. In a little, low, dark room in the purlieus of St. James'—a solitary clerk being witness—the oath was duly administered by a fat old gentleman-usher in full buckle, Robert Southey swearing to be a faithful servant to the King, to reveal all treasons which might come to his knowledge, and to obey the Lord Chamberlain in all matters of the King's service. It was Scott's belief that his generosity had provided for his poorer brother bard an income of three or four hundred pounds a year. In reality the emolument was smaller and the taskwork more irksome than had been supposed. The tierce of Canary, swilled by Ben Jonson and his poetic sons, had been wickedly commuted for a small sum; the whole net income amounted to 90*l.* But this, "the very least of Providence's mercies," as a poor clergyman said when pronouncing grace over a herring, secured an important happines sfor Southey: he did not employ it, as Byron puts it, to butter his bread on both sides; he added twelve pounds to it, and vested it forthwith in an insurance upon his own life. "I have never felt any painful anxiety about providing for my family, . . ." he writes to Scott; "but it is with the deepest feeling of thanksgiving that I have secured this legacy for my wife and children, and it is to you that I am primarily and chiefly indebted."

Croker's assurance was too hastily given. The birthday Ode, indeed, fell into abeyance during the long malady of George III.; but the New Year's Ode had still to be provided. Southey was fortunate in 1814; events worthy of celebration had taken place; a dithyramb, or rather an oration in lines of irregular length, was accordingly produced, and was forwarded to his musical yoke-fellow, Sir William Parsons. But the sight of Southey's page, over which the longs and shorts meandered seemingly at their own sweet will, shocked the orderly mind of the chief musician. What kind of ear could Mr. Southey have? His predecessor, the lamented Mr. Pye, had written his Odes always in regular stanzas. What kind of action was this exhibited by the unbroken State Pegasus? Duly as each New Year approached, Southey set himself to what he called his *ode*ous job; it was the price he payed for the future comfort of his children. While his political assailants pictured the author of *Joan of Arc* as a court-lackey following in the train of the fat Adonis, he, with grim cheerfulness, was earning a provision for his girls; and had it not been a duty to kiss hands on the appointment, His Royal Highness the Prince Regent would never have seen his poet. Gradually the New Year's Ode ceased to be looked for, and Southey was emancipated. His verse-making as laureate occasionally rose into something higher than journeyman work; when public events stirred his heart to joy, or grief, or indignation, he wrote many admirable periods of measured rhetoric. *The Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte* is of a higher strain; a knell, heavy, yet clear-toned, is tolled by its finely-wrought octosyllabics.

A few months after the battle of Waterloo, which had so deeply moved Southey, he started with his wife, a rare voyager from Keswick, and his little daughter Edith May, on a pilgrimage to the scene of victory. The aunts remained to take care of Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, with the nine-years-old darling of all, the only boy, Herbert. With Bruges, "like a city of Elizabeth's age—you expect to see a head with a ruff looking from the window," Southey was beyond measure delighted. At Ghent he ransacked bookshops, and was pleased to see in the Beguinage the realization of his own and Rickman's ideas on Sisterhoods. On a clear September day the travellers visited the battlefield; the autumnal sunshine with soft airs, and now and again a falling leaf, while the bees were busy with the year's last flowers, suited well with the poet's mood of thankfulness, tempered by solemn thought. When, early in December, they returned with a lading of toys to their beloved lake-country, little Edith had hardly recovered from an illness which had attacked her at Aix. It was seven o'clock in the evening by the time they reached Rydal, and to press forward and arrive while the children were asleep would be to defraud every one of the first reward earned by so long absence. "A return home under fortunate circumstances has something of the character of a triumph, and requires daylight." The glorious presence of Skiddaw, and Derwent bright under the winter sky, asked also for a greeting at noon rather than at night. A depth of grave and tender thankfulness lay below Southey's joy that morning; it was twelve years since he had pitched his tent here beside the Greta; twelve years had made him feel the touch of time; but what blessings they had brought! all his heart's desire was here—books, children, leisure, and a peace that passeth understanding. The instant hour however, was not for meditation but for triumph:

"O joyful hour, when to our longing home
The long-expected wheels at length drew nigh!
When the first sound went forth, 'they come! they come!'
And hope's impatience quicken'd every eye!
'Never had man whom Heaven would heap with bliss
More glad return, more happy hour than this.'

"Aloft on yonder bench, with arms dispread,
My boy stood, shouting there his father's name,
Waving his hat around his happy head;
And there a younger group his sisters came:
Smiling they stood with looks of pleased surprise
While tears of joy were seen in elder eyes.

"Soon all and each came crowding round to share
The cordial greeting, the beloved sight;
What welcomings of hand and lip were there!
And when those overflowings of delight
Subsided to a sense of quiet bliss,
Life hath no purer, deeper happiness.

"The young companion of our weary way
Found here the end desired of all her ills;
She who in sickness pining many a day
Hunger'd and thirsted for her native hills,
Forgetful now of suffering past and pain,
Rejoiced to see her own dear home again.

'Recovered now the homesick mountaineer
Sate by the playmate of her infancy,
The twin-like comrade,*—render'd doubly dear
For that long absence; full of life was she
With voluble discourse and eager mien
Telling of all the wonders she had seen.

"Here silently between her parents stood
My dark-eyed Bertha, timid as a dove;
And gently oft from time to time she woo'd
Pressure of hand, or word, or look of love,
With impulse shy of bashful tenderness,
Soliciting again the wished caress.

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* Sara Coleridge.

"The younger twain in wonder lost were they,
My gentle Kate and my sweet Isabel:
Long of our promised coming, day by day,
It had been their delight to hear and tell;
And now when that long-promised hour was come,
Surprise and wakening memory held them dumb.

. . . . . .

"Soon they grew blithe as they were wont to be;
Her old endearments each began to seek;
And Isabel drew near to climb my knee,
And pat with fondling hand her father's cheek;
With voice and touch and look reviving thus
The feelings which had slept in long disuse.

"But there stood one whose heart could entertain
And comprehend the fulness of the joy:
The father, teacher, playmate, was again
Come to his only and his studious boy;
And he beheld again that mother's eye
Which with such ceaseless care had watched his infancy.

"Bring forth the treasures now—a proud display—
For rich as Eastern merchants we return!
Behold the black Beguine, the Sister gray,
The Friars whose heads with sober motion turn,
The Ark well filled with all its numerous hives,
Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japhet, and their wives.

"The tumbler loose of limb; the wrestlers twain;
And many a toy beside of quaint device,
Which, when his fleecy flocks no more can gain
Their pasture on the mountains hoar with ice,
The German shepherd carves with curious knife,
Earning in easy toil the food of frugal life.

"It was a group which Richter, had he viewed,
Might have deemed worthy of his perfect skill;
The keen impatience of the younger brood,
Their eager eyes and fingers never still;
The hope, the wonder, and the restless joy
Of those glad girls and that vociferous boy.

"The aged friend * serene with quiet smile,
Who in their pleasure finds her own delight;
The mother's heart-felt happiness the while;
The aunt's rejoicing in the joyful sight;
And he who in his gayety of heart,
With glib and noisy tongue performed the showman's part."

It was manifest to a thoughtful observer, says De Quincey, that Southey's golden equanimity was bound up in a trinity of chords, a threefold chain—in a conscience clear of offence, in the recurring enjoyments from his honorable industry, and in the gratification of his parental affections. In the light of Herbert's smiles his father almost lived; the very pulses of his heart played in unison with the sound of his son's laughter. "There was," De Quincey goes on, "in

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* Mrs. Wilson—then aged seventy-two.

his manner towards this child, and towards this only, something that marked an excess of delirious doating, perfectly unlike the ordinary chastened movement of Southey's affections; and something also which indicated a vague fear about him; a premature unhappiness, as if already the inaudible tread of calamity could be divined, as if already he had lost him." As a baby, while Edith was only "like an old book, ugly and good," Herbert, in spite of his Tartar eyes, a characteristic of Southey babyhood, was already beautiful. At six he was more gentle and more loving, says Southey, than you can almost conceive. "He has just learnt his Greek alphabet, and is so desirous of learning, so attentive and so quick of apprehension, that, if it please God he should live, there is little doubt but that something will come out of him." In April, 1809, Southey writes to Landor, twenty-four hours after an attack of croup which seized his boy had been subdued: "Even now I am far, very far, from being at ease. There is a love which passeth the love of women, and which is more lightly alarmed than the lightest jealousy. Landor, I am not a Stoic at home; I feel as you do about the fall of an old tree! but, O Christ! what a pang it is to look upon the young shoot and think it will be cut down! And this is the thought which almost at all times haunts me; it comes upon me in moments when I know not whether the tears that start are of love or of bitterness."

The alarm of 1809 passed away, and Herbert grew to the age of nine, active and bright of spirit, yet too pale, and, like his father, hanging too constantly over his books; a finely organized being, delicate in his sensibilities, and prematurely accomplished. Before the snow had melted which shone on Skiddaw that day when the children welcomed home their parents, Herbert Southey lay in his grave. His disease was an affection of the heart, and for weeks his father, palsied by apprehension, and unable to put hand to his regular work, stood by the bedside, with composed countenance, with words of hope, and agonized heart. Each day of trial made his boy more dear. With a trembling pride Southey saw the sufferer's behavior, beautiful in this illness as in all his life; nothing could be more calm, more patient, more collected, more beautiful, more admirable. At last, worn with watching, Southey and his wife were prevailed upon to lie down. The good Mary Barker watched, and it is she who writes the following lines: "Herbert!—that sweetest and most perfect of all children on this earth, who died in my arms at nine years of age, whose death I announced to his father and mother in their bed, where I had prayed and persuaded them to go. When Southey could speak, his first words were, '*The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!*' Never can I forget that moment" (1816).

"I am perfectly resigned," Southey wrote to Bedford on the most mournful of all days, "and do not give way to grief. Thank God I can control myself for the sake of others." But next morning found him weak as a child, even weaker in body than in mind, for long anxiety had worn him to the bone, and while he tried to calm and console the rest, his limbs trembled under him. His first wild wish to fly from Keswick passed away; it was good to be there near the boy's grave. Weak as he was, he flung himself upon his work. "I employ myself incessantly, taking, however, every day as much exercise as I can bear without injurious fatigue, which is not much." "It would surprise you were you to see what I get through in a day." "For the first week I did as much every day as would at other times have seemed the full and overflowing produce of three." From his early discipline in the stoical philosophy some help now was gained; from his active and elastic mind the gain was more; but these would have been insufficient to support him without a heart-felt and ever-present faith that what he had lost was not lost forever. A great change had indeed come upon him. He set his house in order, and made arrangements as if his own death were at hand. He resolved not to be unhappy, but the joyousness of his disposition had received its death-wound; he felt as if he had passed at once from boyhood to the decline of life. He tried dutifully to make head against his depression, but at times with poor success. "I employ myself, and have recovered strength, but in point of spirits I rather lose ground." Still, there are hidden springs of comfort. "The head and flower of my earthly happiness is cut off. But I am *not* unhappy." "When I give way to tears, which is only in darkness or solitude, they are not tears of unmingled pain." All beloved ones grew more precious; the noble fortitude of his wife made her more than ever a portion of his best self. His uncle's boy, Edward, he could not love more than he had loved him before; but, "as far as possible, he will be to me hereafter," writes Southey, "in the place of my son." And in truth the blessing of Herbert's boyhood remained with him still; a most happy, a most beautiful boyhood it had been; he was thankful for having possessed the child so long; "for worlds I would not but have been his father." "I have abundant blessings left; for each and all of these I am truly thankful; but of all the blessings which God has given me, this child, who is removed, is the one I *still* prize the most." To relieve feelings which he dared not utter with his lips, he thought of setting about a monument in verse for Herbert and himself, which might make one inseparable memory for father and son. A page or two of fragmentary thoughts in verse and prose for this poetic monument exists, but Southey could not keep his imagination enough above his heart to dare to go on with it; to do so would have dissolved his heart anew. One or two of these holy scriptures of woe, truly red drops of Southey's life-blood, will tell enough of this love passing the love of women.

> "Thy life was a day; and sum it well, life is but a week of such days—with how much storm and cold and darkness! Thine was a sweet spring day—a vernal Sabbath, all sunshine, hope, and promise."

"And that name
In sacred silence buried, which was still
At morn and eve the never-wearying theme
Of dear discourse."

"Playful thoughts
Turned now to gall and esil."

"No more great attempts, only a few autumnal flowers like second primroses, etc."

"They who look for me in our Father's kingdom
Will look for him also; inseparably
Shall we be remembered."

"Come, then,
Pain and Infirmity—appointed guests,
My heart is ready."

From the day of his son's death Southey began to step down from the heights of life, with a steadfast foot, and head still held erect. He recovered cheerfulness, but it was as one who has undergone an amputation seeks the sunshine. Herbert's grave anchored him in Keswick. An offer of 2000*l.* a year for a daily article in the *Times* did not tempt him to London. His home, his books, his literary work, Skiddaw, Derwentwater, and Crosthwaite churchyard were too dear. Three years later came the unlooked-for birth of a second boy; and Cuthbert was loved by his father; but the love was chastened and controlled of autumnal beauty and seriousness.

When the war with France had ended, depression of trade was acutely felt in England; party spirit ran high, and popular passions were dangerously roused. In the spring of 1817, the Laureate saw to his astonishment a poem entitled *Wat Tyler*, by Robert Southey, advertised as just published. He had written this lively dramatic sketch in the full fervor of Republicanism twenty-three years previously; the manuscript had passed into other hands, and he had long ceased to think of it. The skulking rogue and the knavish publisher who now gave it to the world had chosen their time judiciously; this rebuke to the apostate of the *Quarterly* would be a sweet morsel for gossip-mongers to roll under the tongue, an infallible pill to purge melancholy with all true children of progress. No fewer than sixty thousand copies, it is said, were sold. *Wat Tyler* suited well with Southey's nonage; it has a bright rhetorical fierceness of humanity. The speech-making radical blacksmith, "still toiling, yet still poor," his insulted daughter, her virtuous lover, the communist priest John Ball, whose amiable theology might be that of Mr. Belsham in his later days, stand over against the tyrant king, his Archiepiscopal absolver from oaths, the haughty nobles, and the servile minions of the law. There was nothing in the poem that could be remembered with shame, unless it is shameful to be generous and inexperienced at the age of twenty. But England in 1817 seemed charged with combustibles, and even so small a spark as this was not to be blown about without a care. The Prince Regent had been fired at; there were committals for treason; there were riots in Somersetshire; the swarm of Manchester Blanketeers announced a march to London; the Habeas Corpus was suspended; before the year was out, Brandreth and his fellows had been executed at Derby. Southey applied to the Court of Chancery for an injunction to restrain the publication of his poem. It was refused by Lord Eldon, on the ground that the publication being one calculated to do injury to society, the author could not reclaim his property in it. There the matter might have dropped; but it seemed good to Mr. William Smith, representing liberal Norwich, where Southey had many friends, to take his seat in the House of Commons one evening with the *Quarterly Review* in one pocket and *Wat Tyler* in the other, and to read aloud contrasted extracts showing how the malignant renegade could play the parts, as it suited him, of a seditious firebrand and a servile courtier. Wynn on the spot administered a well-deserved rebuke; Wilberforce wrote to Southey that, had he been present, his voice would also have been heard. Coleridge vindicated him in the *Courier*. Seldom, indeed, was Southey drawn into controversy. When pelted with abuse, he walked on with uplifted head, and did not turn round; it seemed to him that he was of a stature to invite bespattering. His self-confidence was high and calm; that he possessed no common abilities, was certain; and the amount of toil which went into his books gave him a continual assurance of their worth which nothing could gainsay; he had no time for moods of dejection and self-distrust. But if Southey struck, he struck with force, and tried to leave his mark on his antagonist. To repel this attack made in the House of Commons, was a duty. *A Letter to William Smith, Esq., M.P.*, was written, as Wordsworth wished, with the strength of masculine indignation; blow after blow is planted with sure effect; no word is wasted; there is skill in the hard hitting; and the antagonist fairly overthrown, Southey, with one glance of scorn, turns on his heel, and moves lightly away. "I wish you joy," wrote Walter Scott, "of your triumphant answer. . . . Enough of this gentleman, who I think will not walk out of the round again to slander the conduct of individuals." The concluding sentences of the Letter give in brief Southey's fearless review of his unstained career.

"How far the writings of Mr. Southey may be found to deserve a favorable acceptance from after ages, time will decide; but a name which, whether worthily or not, has been conspicuous in the literary history of its age, will certainly not perish. . . . It will be related that he lived in the bosom of his family, in absolute retirement; that in all his writings there breathed the same abhorrence of oppression and immorality, the same spirit of devotion, and the same ardent wishes for the melioration of mankind; and that the only charge which malice could bring against him was, that as he grew older, his opinions altered concerning the means by which that melioration was to be effected, and that as he learnt to understand the institutions of his country, he learnt to appreciate them rightly, to love, and to revere, and to defend them. It will be said of him that in an age of personality he abstained from satire; and that during the course of his literary life, often as he was assailed, the only occasion on which he ever condescended to reply was when a certain Mr. William Smith insulted him in Parliament with the appellation of renegade. On that occasion, it will be said, he vindicated himself, as it became him to do, and treated his calumniator with just and memorable severity. Whether it shall be added that Mr. William Smith redeemed his own character by coming forward with honest manliness, and acknowledging that he had spoken rashly and unjustly, concerns himself, but is not of the slightest importance to me."

One other personal strife is worthy of notice. When visiting London in 1813, he made the acquaintance of Byron. "Is Southey magnanimous?" Byron asked Rogers, remembering how he had tried his wit in early days on *Thalaba* and *Madoc.* Rogers could answer for Southey's magnanimity, and the two poets met, Southey finding in Byron very much more to like than he had expected, and Byron being greatly struck by Southey's "epic appearance." "To have that poet's head and shoulders," he said, "I would almost have written his Sapphics." And in his diary he wrote: "Southey's talents are of the first order. His prose is perfect. . . . He has probably written too much of poetry for the present generation; posterity will probably select; but he has passages equal to anything." At a later date Byron thought Southey's *Roderick* "the first poem of the time." But when about to publish *Don Juan*, a work "too free for these very modest days," what better mode of saucily meeting public opinion, and getting a first laugh on his side, than to dedicate such a poem to a virtuous Laureate, and show that he and his fellows, who had uttered nothing base, were yet political turncoats, not entitled by any superfine morality to assume airs of indignation against him and his reprobate hero? The dedication was shown about and laughed over, though not yet printed. Southey heard of these things, and felt released from that restraint of good feeling which made him deal tenderly in his writings with every one to whom he had once given his hand. An attack upon himself would not alone have roused Southey; no man received abuse with more self-possession. Political antagonism would still have left him able to meet a fellow-poet on the common ground of literature. When distress fastened upon Leigh Hunt, whose *Examiner* and *Liberal* had never spared the Laureate, Mr. Foster did not hesitate to apply to Southey for assistance, which was declined solely because the circular put forward Leigh Hunt's political services as those chiefly entitling him to relief. "Those who are acquainted with me," Southey wrote, "know that I am neither resentful nor intolerant;" and after expressing admiration of Leigh Hunt's powers, the letter goes on to suggest that his friends should draw up a circular in which, without compromising any of his opinions, the appeal might be made solely upon the score of literary merit, "placing him thus, as it were, within the sacred territory which ought always to be considered and respected as neutral ground." Wise and admirable words! But there was one offence which was to Southey the unforgivable sin against the holy spirit of a nation's literature. To entice poetry from the altar, and to degrade her for the pleasure of wanton imaginations, seemed to Southey, feeling as he did the sanctity of the love of husband and wife, of father and child, to be treason against humanity. Southey was, indeed, tolerant of a certain Rabelaisian freedom in playing with some of the enclosed incidents of our life. "All the greatest of poets," he says, "have had a spice of Pantagruelism in their composition, which I verily believe was essential to their greatness." But to take an extravagant fling in costume of a *sans-culotte*, and to play the part of "pander-general to the youth of Great Britain," were different things. In his preface to *A Vision of Judgment*, Southey deplored the recent fall in the ethical spirit of English literature, "which for half a century had been distinguished for its moral purity," and much of the guilt he laid on the leaders of "the Satanic School." In the long-run the interests of art, as of all high endeavor, are invariably proved to be one with the interest of a nation's morality. It had taken many lives of men to lift literature out of the beast. From prudential virtue and the lighter ethics of Addison it had risen to the grave moral dignity of Johnson, and from that to the impassioned spirituality of Wordsworth. Should all this be abandoned, and should literature now be permitted to reel back into the brute? We know that the title "Satanic School" struck home, that Byron was moved, and replied with brilliant play of wit in his *Vision of Judgment*. The laughers went over to Byron's side. One who would be witty has certain advantages, if content to disregard honesty and good manners. To be witty was not Southey's concern. "I saw," he said, many years after, "that Byron was a man of quick impulses, strong passions, and great powers. I saw him abuse these powers; and, looking at the effect of his writings on the public mind, it was my duty to denounce such of them as aimed at the injury of morals and religion. This was all." If continental critics find in what he set down a characteristic example of the bourgeois morality of England, we note with interest their point of view.*

"Bertha, Kate, and Isabel," wrote Southey on June 26, 1820, "you have been very good girls, and have written me very nice letters, with which I was much pleased. This is the last letter which I can write in return; and as I happen to have a quiet hour to myself here at Streatham, on Monday noon, I will employ that hour in relating to you the whole history and manner of my being ell-ell-deed at Oxford by the Vice-Chancellor." Public distinctions of this kind he rated, perhaps, below their true value. To stand well with Murray and Longman was more to him than any handle to his name. A similar honor from Cambridge he declined. His gold medal from the Royal Society of Literature he changed for a silver coffee-pot for Mrs. Southey. To

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* To certain false allegations of fact made by Byron, Southey replied in *The Courier*, and reprinted his letters in *Essays*, *Moral and Political*, vol. ii. pp. 183-205.

"be be-doctored and called everything that ends in issimus," was neither any harm nor much good; but to take his seat between such doctors as the Duke of Wellington, and—perhaps—Sir Walter Scott was a temptation. When his old school-fellow Phillimore presented Southey, the theatre rang with applause. Yet the day was, indeed, one of the heaviest in his life. Never had he stopped for a night in Oxford since he left it in 1794, intending to bid farewell to Europe for an Utopia in some back settlement of America. Not one who really loved him—for Scott could not appear—was present. When in the morning he went to look at Balliol, no one remembered him except old Adams, who had attempted to dress his hair as a freshman, and old Mrs. Adams, the laundress, both now infirm. From the tumultuous theatre Southey strolled into Christ Church walks alone. What changes time had made! Many of the friends with whom he had sauntered there were in their graves. So brooding, he chewed the bitter-sweet of remembrance, until at length a serious gratitude prevailed. "Little girls," the letter ends, "you know it might be proper for me now to wear a large wig, and to be called Doctor Southey, and to become very severe, and leave off being a comical papa. And if you should find that ell-ell-deeing has made this difference in me, you will not be surprised. However, I shall not come down in my wig, neither shall I wear my robes at home."

While in Holland, in the summer of 1826, a more conspicuous honor was unexpectedly thrust upon Southey. The previous year he had gone abroad with Henry Taylor, and at Douay was bitten on the foot by Satan, according to his conjecture, sitting squat at his great toe; at Leyden he was obliged to rest his inflamed foot, and there it was his good fortune to be received into the house of the poet Bilderdijk, a delightful old erudite and enthusiast, whose charming wife was the translator of *Roderick*. In 1826 he visited his kind friends once more, and at Brussels received the surprising intelligence that during his absence he had been elected a member of Parliament. Lord Radnor, an entire stranger, had read with admiration Southey's confession of faith concerning Church and State, in the last paragraph of his *Book of the Church*. By his influence the poet had been elected for the borough of Downton; the return, however, was null, for Southey held a pension during pleasure; and even if this were resigned, where was the property qualification? This latter objection was met by Sir Robert Inglis, who desired to know whether Southey would sit in Parliament if an estate of 300*l*. a year were purchased for him. An estate of 300*l*. a year would be a very agreeable thing to Robert Lackland; but he had no mind to enter on a new public sphere for which he was ill qualified by his previous life, to risk the loss of health by midnight debates, to abandon the education of his little boy, and to separate himself more or less from his wife and daughters. He could not be wrong, he believed, in the quiet confidence which assured him that he was in his proper place.

Now more than ever before, Edith Southey needed her husband's sustaining love. On the day of his return to Keswick, while amused to find himself the object of mob popularity, he learnt that one of his daughters was ailing; the illness, however, already seemed to have passed the worst. This appearance of amendment quickly proved deceptive; and, on a Sunday evening in mid July, Isabel, "the most radiant creature that I ever beheld or shall behold," passed away, while her father was on his knees in the room below, praying that she might be released from suffering either by recovery or by death. All that had been gone through ten years before, renewed itself with dread exactness. Now, as then, the first day was one of stunned insensibility; now, as then, the next morning found him weak as a child, and striving in his weakness to comfort those who needed his support; now, as then, he turned to Grosvenor Bedford for a heart on which he might lay his own heart prone, letting his sorrow have its way. "Nothing that has assailed my character, or affected my worldly fortune, ever gave me an hour's vexation, or deprived me of an hour's rest. My happiness has been in my family, and there only was I vulnerable; that family is now divided between earth and heaven, and I must pray to remain with those who are left, so long as I can contribute to their welfare and comfort, rather than be gathered (as otherwise I would fain be) to those who are gone." On that day of which the word *Τετέλεσπαι* is the record, the day on which the body of his bright Isabel was committed to earth, Southey wrote a letter to his three living daughters, copied with his own hand for each. It said what he could not bear to say of consolation and admonishment by word of mouth; it prepared them for the inevitable partings to come; it urged on them with measureless tenderness the duty of self-watchfulness, of guarding against little faults, of bearing and forbearing; it told them of his own grief to think that he should ever by a harsh or hasty word have given their dead sister even a momentary sorrow which might have been spared; it ended with the blessing of their afflicted father.

Sorrows of this kind, as Southey has truly said, come the heavier when they are repeated; under such strokes a courageous heart may turn coward. On Mrs. Southey a weight as of years had been laid; her spirits sank, her firmness gave way, a breath of danger shook her. Southey's way of bearing himself towards the dead is that saddest way—their names were never uttered; each one of the household had, as it were, a separate chamber in which the images of their dead ones lay, and each went in alone and veiled. The truth is, Southey had little native hardihood of temperament; self-control with him was painfully acquired. In solitude and darkness his tears flowed; when in his slumbers the images of the dead came to him, he could not choose but weep. Therefore, all the more among those whom he wished to lead into the cheerful ways of life, he had need to keep a guard upon his tenderness. He feared to preserve relics, and did not like to bear in mind birthdays, lest they should afterwards become too dangerously charged with remembrance and grief. "Look," he writes, "at some verses in the *Literary Souvenir*, p. 113; they are written by a dear friend of mine on the death of—you will know who"—for his pen would have trembled in tracing the name Isabel. And yet his habitual feelings with respect to those who had departed were not bitter; the dead were absent—that was all; he thought of them and of living friends at a distance with the same complacency, the same affection, only with more tenderness of the dead.

Greta Hall, once resounding with cheerful voices, had been growing silent. Herbert was gone; Isabel was gone. In 1829 Sara Coleridge went, a bride, tearful yet glad, her mother accompanying her, to distant London. Five years later, Edith May Southey became the wife of the Rev. John Warter. Her father fell back, even more than in former years, upon the never-failing friends of his library. It was in these darkening years that he sought relief in carrying out the idea, conceived long before, of a story which should be no story, but a spacious receptacle for mingled wit and wisdom, experience and book-lore, wholesome nonsense and solemn meditation. *The Doctor*, begun in jest after merry talks with Grosvenor Bedford, grew more and more earnest as Southey proceeded. "He dreamt over it and brooded over it, laid it aside for months and years, resumed it after long intervals, and more often, latterly, in thoughtfulness than in mirth, and fancied at last that he could put into it more of his mind than could conveniently be produced in any other form." The secret of its authorship was carefully kept. Southey amused himself somewhat laboriously with ascribing it now to this hand and now to that. When the first two volumes arrived, as if from the anonymous author, Southey thrust them away with well-assumed impatience, and the disdainful words, "Some novel, I suppose." Yet several of his friends had shrewd suspicions that the manuscript lay somewhere hidden in Greta Hall, and on receiving their copies wrote to thank the veritable donor; these thanks were forwarded by Southey, not without a smile in which something of irony mingled, to Theodore Hook, who was not pleased to enter into the jest. "I see in *The Doctor*," says its author, playing the part of an impartial critic, "a little of Rabelais, but not much; more of Tristram Shandy, somewhat of Burton, and perhaps more of Montaigne; but methinks the *quintum quid* predominates?" The *quintum quid* is that wisdom of the heart, that temper of loyal and cheerful acquiscence in the rule of life as appointed by a Divine Master, which characterizes Southey.

For the third volume of *The Doctor*, in that chapter which tells of Leonard Bacon's sorrow for his Margaret, Southey wrote as follows:

> "Leonard had looked for consolation, where, when sincerely sought, it is always to be found; and he had experienced that religion effects in a true believer all that philosophy professes, and more than all that mere philosophy can perform. The wounds which stoicism would cauterize, religion heals.

> There is a resignation with which, it may be feared, most of us deceive ourselves. To bear what must be borne, and submit to what cannot be resisted, is no more than what the unregenerate heart is taught by the instinct of animal nature. But to acquiesce in the afflictive dispensations of Providence—to make one's own will conform in all things to that of our Heavenly Father—to say to him in the sincerity of faith, when we drink of the bitter cup, 'Thy will be done!'—to bless the name of the Lord as much from the heart when he takes away as when he gives, and with a depth of feeling of which, perhaps, none but the afflicted heart is capable, this is the resignation which religion teaches, this is the sacrifice which it requires."

These words, written with no forefeeling, were the last put on paper before the great calamity burst upon Southey. "I have been parted from my wife," he tells Grosvenor Bedford on October 2, 1834, "by something worse than death. Forty years she has been the life of my life; and I have left her this day in a lunatic asylum."

Southey's union with his wife had been at the first one of love, and use and wont had made her a portion of his very being. Their provinces in the household had soon defined themselves. He in the library earned their means of support; all else might be left to her with absolute confidence in her wise contrivance and quiet energy. Beneath the divided work in their respective provinces their lives ran on in deep and still accord. Now he felt for the first time shrunk into the limits of a solitary will. All that had grown out of the past was deranged by a central disturbance; no branch had been lopped away, but the main trunk was struck, and seared, and shaken to the roots. "Mine is a strong heart," Southey writes; "I will not say that the last week has been the most trying of my life; but I will say that the heart which could bear it can bear anything." Yet, when he once more set himself to work, a common observer, says his son, would have noticed little change in him, though to his family the change was great indeed. His most wretched hour was when he woke at dawn from broken slumbers; but a word of hope was enough to counteract the mischief of a night's unrest. No means were neglected which might serve to keep him in mental and bodily health; he walked in all weathers; he pursued his task-work diligently, yet not over-diligently; he collected materials for work of his choice. When, in the spring of 1835, it was found that the sufferer might return to wear out the body of this death in her own home, it was marvellous, declares Cuthbert Southey, how much of his old elasticity remained, and how, though no longer happy, he could be contented and cheerful, and take pleasure in the pleasures of others. He still could contribute something to his wife's comfort. Through the weary dream which was now her life she knew him, and took pleasure in his coming and going.

When Herbert died, Southey had to ask a friend to lend him money to tide over the short period of want which followed his weeks of enforced inaction. Happily now, for the first time in his life, his income was beforehand with his expenses. A bequest of some hun dreds of pounds had come in; his *Naval Biographies* were paying him well; and during part of Mrs. Southey's illness he was earning a respectable sum, intended for his son's education, by his *Life of Cowper*—a work to which a painful interest was added by the study of mental alienation forced upon him in his own household. So the days passed, not altogether cheerlessly, in work if possible more arduous than ever. "One morning," writes his son, "shortly after the letters had arrived, he called me into his study. 'You will be surprised,' he said, 'to hear that Sir Robert Peel has recommended me to the King for the distinction of a baronetcy, and will probably feel some disappointment when I tell you that I shall not accept it.'" Accompanying Sir Robert Peel's official communication came a private letter asking in the kindest manner how he could be of use to Southey. "Will you tell me," he said, "without reserve, whether the possession of power puts within my reach the means of doing anything which can be serviceable or acceptable to you; and whether you will allow me to find some compensation for the many sacrifices which office imposes upon me, in the opportunity of marking my gratitude, as a public man, for the eminent services you have rendered, not only to literature, but to the higher interests of virtue and religion?" Southey's answer stated simply what his circumstances were, showing how unbecoming and unwise it would be to accept the proffered honor: it told the friendly statesman of the provision made for his family—no inconsiderable one—in the event of his death; it went on to speak of his recent affliction; how this had sapped his former confidence in himself; how it had made him an old man, and forced upon him the reflection that a sudden stroke might deprive him of those faculties by which his family had hitherto been supported. "I could afford to die, but not to be disabled," he wrote in his first draft; but fearing that these words would look as if he wanted to trick out pathetically a plain statement, he removed them. Finally, if such an increase of his pension as would relieve him from anxiety on behalf of his family could form part of a plan for the encouragement of literature, it would satisfy all his desires. "Young as I then was," Cuthbert Southey writes, "I could not, without tears, hear him read with his deep and faltering voice, his wise refusal and touching expression of those feelings and fears he had never before given utterance to, to any of his own family." Two months later Sir Robert Peel signed a warrant adding 300*l.* annually to Southey's existing pension. He had resolved to recognize literary and scientific eminence as a national claim; the act was done upon public grounds, and Southey had the happiness of knowing that others beside himself would partake of the benefit.

"Our domestic prospects are darkening upon us daily," Southey wrote in July, 1835. "I know not whether the past or the present seems most like a dream to me, so great and strange is the difference. But yet a little while, and all will again be at the best." While Mrs. Southey lived, a daily demand was made upon his sympathies and solicitude which it was his happiness to fulfil. But from all except his wife he seemed already to be dropping away into a state of passive abstraction. Kate and Bertha silently ministered to his wants, laid the books he wanted in his way, replenished his ink-bottle, mended his pens, stirred the fire, and said nothing. A visit to the south-west of England in company with his son broke the long monotony of endurance. It was a happiness to meet Landor at Bristol, and Mrs. Bray at Tavistock, and Mrs. Bray's friend, the humble poet, Mary Colling, whose verses he had reviewed in the *Quarterly*. Yet to return to his sorrowful home was best of all; there is a leap up of the old spirits in a letter to his daughters announcing his approach. It is almost the last gleam of brightness. In the autumn of that year (1835) Edith Southey wasted away, growing weaker and weaker. The strong arm on which she had leaned for two-and-forty years, supported her down stairs each day and bore her up again at evening. When the morning of November 16th broke, she passed quietly "from death unto life."

From that day Southey was an altered man. His spirits fell to a still lower range. For the first time he was conscious of the distance which years had set between him and his children. Yet his physical strength was unbroken; nothing but snow deterred him from his walk; he could still circle the lake, or penetrate into Borrowdale on foot. But Echo, whom he had summoned to rejoice, was not roused by any call of his. Within-doors it was only by a certain violence to himself that he could speak. In the library he read aloud his proof-sheets alone; but for this he might almost have forgotten the sound of his own voice. Still, he is not wholly abandoned to grief; he looked back and saw that life had been good; its hardest moral discipline had served to train the heart; much still remained that was of worth—Cuthbert was quietly pursuing his Oxford studies; Bertha was about to be united in marriage to her cousin, Herbert Hill, son of that good uncle who had done so much to shape Southey's career. "If not hopeful," he writes, "I am more than contented, and disposed to welcome and entertain any good that may yet be in store for me, without any danger of being disappointed if there should be none." Hope of a sober kind indeed had come to him. For twenty years he had known Caroline Bowles; they had long been in constant correspondence; their acquaintance had matured into friendship. She was now in her fifty-second year; he in his sixty-fifth. It seemed to Southey natural that, without making any breach with his past life, he should accept her companionship in the nearest way possible, should give to her all he could of what remained, and save himself from that forlorn feeling which he feared might render old age miserable and useless.

But already the past had subdued Southey, and if any future lay before him it was a cloud lifeless and gray. In the autumn of 1838 he started for a short tour on the Continent with his old friend Senhouse, his son Cuthbert, John Kenyon, their master of the horse, Captain Jones, the chamberlain, and Crabb Robinson, who was intendant and paid the bills. On the way from Boulogne they turned aside to visit Chinon, for Southey wished to stand on the spot where his first heroine, Joan of Arc, had recognized the French king. At Paris he roamed along the quays and hunted bookstalls. The change and excitement seemed to have served him; he talked freely and was cheerful. "Still," writes his son, "I could not fail to perceive a considerable change in him from the time we had last travelled together—all his movements were slower, he was subject to frequent fits of absence, and there was an indecision in his manner and an unsteadiness in his step which was wholly unusual with him." He often lost his way, even in the hotels; then laughed at his own mistakes, and yet was painfully conscious of his failing memory. His journal breaks off abruptly, when not more than two thirds of the tour had been accomplished. In February, 1839, his brother, Dr. Southey—ever a true comrade—describes him as working slowly and with an abstraction not usual to him; sometimes to write even a letter seemed an effort. In midsummer his marriage to Caroline Bowles took place, and with her he returned to Keswick in August. On the way home his friends in London saw that he was much altered. "The animation and peculiar clearness of his mind," wrote Henry Taylor, "was quite gone, except a gleam or two now and then. . . . The appearance was that of a placid languor, sometimes approaching to torpor, but not otherwise than cheerful. He is thin and shrunk in person, and that extraordinary face of his has no longer the fire and strength it used to have, though the singular cast of the features and the habitual expressions make it still a most remarkable phenomenon." Still, his friends had not ceased to hope that tranquillity would restore mental tone, and he himself was planning the completion of great designs. "As soon as we are settled at Keswick, I shall resolutely begin upon the *History of Portugal*, as a duty which I owe to my uncle's memory. Half of the labor I consider as done. But I have long since found the advantage of doing more than one thing at a time, and the *History of the Monastic Orders* is the other thing to which I shall set to with hearty good-will. Both these are works of great pith and moment."

Alas! the current of these enterprises was already turned awry. In August it was not without an occasional uncertainty that he sustained conversation. "He lost himself for a moment; he was conscious of it, and an expression passed over his countenance which was very touching—an expression of pain and also of resignation. . . . The charm of his manner is perhaps even enhanced at present (at least when one knows the circumstances), by the gentleness and patience which pervade it." Before long the character of his handwriting, which had been so exquisite, was changed to something like the abored scrawl of a child; then he ceased to write. Still he could read, and, even when he could no longer take in the meaning of what was before him, his eye followed the lines of the printed page. At last even this was beyond his power. He would walk slowly round his library, pleased with the presence of his cherished possessions, taking some volume down mechanically from the shelf. In 1840 Wordsworth went over to Greta Hall. "Southey did not recognize me," he writes, "till he was told. Then his eyes flashed for a moment with their former brightness, but he sank into the state in which I had found him, patting with both hands his books affectionately like a child." In the *Life of Cowper* he had spoken of the distress of one who suffers from mental disease as being that of a dream—"a dream, indeed, from which the sufferer can neither wake nor be awakened; but it pierces no deeper, and there seems to be the same dim consciousness of its unreality." So was it now with himself. Until near the end he retained considerable bodily strength; his snow-white hair grew darker; it was the spirit which had endured shattering strokes of fate, and which had spent itself in studying to be quiet.

After a short attack of fever, the end came on the 21st of March, 1843. Never was that "Well done!" the guerdon of the good and faithful servant, pronounced amid a deeper consent of those who attended and had ears to hear. On a dark and stormy morning Southey's body was borne to the beautiful churchyard of Crosthwaite, towards which he had long looked affectionately as his place of rest. There lay his three children and she who was the life of his life. Skiddaw gloomed solemnly overhead. A gray-haired, venerable man who had crossed the hills stood there leaning on the arm of his son-in-law; these two, Wordsworth and Quillinan, were the only strangers present. As the words "ashes to ashes," were uttered, a sudden gleam of sunshine touched the grave; the wind dropped, the rain was over, and the birds had begun their songs of spring. The mourners turned away, thinking of a good man's life and death with peace—

> "And calm of mind, all passion spent."

CHAPTER VII.

SOUTHEY'S WORK IN LITERATURE.

SOUTHEY'S career of authorship falls into two chief periods—a period during which poetry occupied the higher place and prose the lower, and a period during which this order was reversed. His translations of romantic fiction—*Amadis of Gaul*, *Palmerin of England*, and *The Cid*—connect the work of the earlier with that of the latter period, and serve to mark the progress of his mind from legend to history, and from the fantastic to the real. The poet in Southey died young, or, if he did not die, fell into a numbness and old age like that of which an earlier singer writes :

> " Elde that in my spirit dulleth me,
> Hath of endyting all the subtilité
> Welnyghe bereft out of my remembraunce."

After thirty Southey seldom cared to utter himself in occasional verse. The uniformity of his life, the equable cheerfulness maintained by habits of regular work, his calm religious faith, his amiable Stoicism, left him without the material for lyrical poetry; and one so honest and healthy had no care to feign experiences of the heart which were not his. Still, he could apply himself to the treatment of large subjects with a calm, continuous energy ; but as time went on his hand grew slack, and wrought with less ease. Scarcely had he overcome the narrative poet's chief difficulty, that of subduing varied materials to an unity of design, when he put aside verse, and found it more natural to be historian than poet.

The poetry of sober feeling is rare in lyrical verse. This may be found admirably rendered in some of Southey's shorter pieces. Although his temper was ardent and hopeful, his poems of pensive remembrance, of meditative calm, are perhaps the most characteristic. Among these his *Inscriptions* rank high. Some of those in memory of the dead are remarkable for their fine poise of feeling, all that is excessive and transitory having been subdued ; for the tranquil depths of sorrow and of hope which lie beneath their clear, melodious words.

Southey's larger poetical works are fashioned of two materials which do not always entirely harmonize. First, material brought from his own moral nature ; his admiration of something elevated in the character of man or woman—generosity, gentleness, loyalty, fortitude, faith. And, secondly, material gathered from abroad ; mediæval pomps of religion and circumstance of war ; Arabian marvels, the work of the enchanters and the genii ; the wild beauties and adventure of life amid New-World tribes ; the monstrous mythology of the

Brahman. With such material the poet's inventive talent deals freely, rearranges details or adds to them; still Southey is here rather a *finder* than a *maker*. His diligence in collecting and his skill in arranging were so great that it was well if the central theme did not disappear among manifold accessories. One who knows Southey, however, can recognize his ethical spirit in every poem. Thalaba, as he himself confessed, is a male Joan of Arc. Destiny or Providence has marked alike the hero and the heroine from mankind; the sheepfold of Domremi, and the palm-grove by old Moath's tent, alike nurture virgin purity and lofty aspiration. Thalaba, like Joan, goes forth a delegated servant of the Highest to war against the powers of evil; Thalaba, like Joan, is sustained under the trials of the way by the sole talisman of faith. We are not left in doubt as to where Southey found his ideal. Mr. Barbauld thought *Joan of Arc* was modelled on the Socinian Christ. He was mistaken; Southey's ideal was native to his soul. "Early admiration, almost adoration of Leonidas; early principles of Stoicism derived from the habitual study of Epictetus, and the French Revolution at its height when I was just eighteen—by these my mind was moulded." And from these, absorbed into Southey's very being, came Thalaba and Joan.

The word *high-souled* takes possession of the mind as we think of Southey's heroic personages. Poetry, he held, ought rather to elevate than to affect—a Stoical doctrine transferred to art, which meant that his own poetry was derived more from admiration of great qualities than from sympathy with individual men or women. Neither the quick and passionate tenderness of Burns nor the stringent pathos of Wordsworth can be found in Southey's verse. No eye probably ever shed a tear over the misery of Ladurlad and his persecuted daughter. She, like the lady in *Comus*, is set above our pity and perhaps our love. In *Kehama*, a work of Southey's mature years, the chivalric ardor of his earlier heroes is transformed into the sterner virtues of fortitude and an almost despairing constancy. The power of evil, as conceived by the poet, has grown more despotic; little can be achieved by the light-winged Glendoveer—a more radiant Thalaba—against the Rajah; only the lidless eye of Seeva can destroy that tyranny of lust and pride. *Roderick* marks a higher stage in the development of Southey's ethical ideal. Roderick, too, is a delegated champion of right against force and fraud; he, too, endures mighty pains. But he is neither such a combatant, pure and intrepid, as goes forth from the Arab tent, nor such a blameless martyr as Ladurlad. He is first a sinner enduring just punishment; then a stricken penitent; and from his shame and remorse he is at last uplifted by enthusiasm, on behalf of his God and his people, into a warrior saint, the Gothic Maccabee.

Madoc stands somewhat away from the line of Southey's other narrative poems. Though, as Scott objected, the personages in *Madoc* are too nearly abstract types, Southey's ethical spirit dominates this poem less than any of the others. The narrative flows on more simply. The New-World portion tells a story full of picturesque incident, with the same skill and grace that belong to Southey's best prose writings. Landor highly esteemed *Madoc*. Scott declared that he had read it three times since his first cursory perusal, and each time with increased admiration of the poetry. Fox was in the habit of reading aloud after supper to eleven o'clock, when it was the rule at St. Ann's Hill to retire; but while *Madoc* was in his hand he read until after midnight. Those, however, who opened the bulky quarto were few; the tale was out of relation with the time; it interpreted no need, no aspiration, no passion of the dawn of the present century. And the mind of the time was not enough disengaged to concern itself deeply with the supposed adventures of a Welsh prince of the twelfth century among the natives of America.

At heart, then, Southey's poems are in the main the outcome of his moral nature; this we recognize through all disguises—Mohammedan, Hindoo, or Catholic. He planned and partly wrote a poem—*Oliver Newman*—which should associate his characteristic ideal with Puritan principles and ways of life. The foreign material through which his ethical idea was set forth went far, with each poem, to determine its reception by the public. Coleridge has spoken of "the pastoral charm and wild, streaming lights of the *Thalaba*." Dewy night moon-mellowed, and the desert-circle girded by the sky, the mystic palace of Shedad, the vernal brook, Oneiza's favorite kidling, the lamp-light shining rosy through the damsel's delicate fingers, the aged Arab in the tent-door—these came with a fresh charm into English narrative poetry eighty years ago. The landscape and the manners of Spain, as pictured in *Roderick*, are of marked grandeur and simplicity. In *Kehama*, Southey attempted a bolder experiment; and although the poem became popular, even a well-disposed reader may be allowed to sympathize with the dismay of Charles Lamb among the monstrous gods: "I never read books of travels, at least not farther than Paris or Rome. I can just endure Moors, because of their connection as foes with Christians; but Abyssinians, Ethiops, Esquimaux, Dervises, and all that tribe I hate. I believe I fear them in some manner. A Mohammedan turban on the stage, though enveloping some well-known face, . . . does not give me unalloyed pleasure. I am a Christian, Englishman, Londoner, Templar. God help me when I come to put off these snug relations, and to get abroad into the world to come."

Though his materials are often exotic, in style Southey aimed at the simplicity and strength of undefiled English. If to these melody was added, he had attained all he desired. To conversations with William Taylor about German poetry—certainly not to Taylor's example—he ascribes his faith in the power of plain words to express in poetry the highest thoughts and strongest feelings. He perceived, in his own day, the rise of the ornate style, which has since been perfected by

Tennyson, and he regarded it as a vice in art. In early years Akenside had been his instructor; afterwards he owed more to Landor than to any other master of style. From *Madoc* and *Roderick*—both in blank-verse—fragments could be severed which might pass for the work of Landor; but Southey's free and facile manner, fostered by early reading of Ariosto, and by constant study of Spenser, soon reasserts itself; from under the fragment of monumental marble, white almost as Landor's, a stream wells out smooth and clear, and lapses away, never dangerously swift nor mysteriously deep. On the whole, judged by the highest standard, Southey's poetry takes a midmost rank; it neither renders into art a great body of thought and passion, nor does it give faultless expression to lyrical moments. But it is the output of a large and vigorous mind, amply stored with knowledge; its breath of life is the moral ardor of a nature strong and generous, and therefore it can never cease to be of worth.

Southey is at his best in prose. And here it must be borne in mind that, though so voluminous a writer, he did not achieve his most important work, the *History of Portugal*, for which he had gathered vast collections. It cannot be doubted that this, if completed, would have taken a place among our chief histories. The splendor of story and the heroic personages would have lifted Southey into his highest mood. We cannot speak with equal confidence of his projected work of second magnitude, the *History of the Monastic Orders*. Learned and sensible it could not fail to be, and Southey would have recognized the more substantial services of the founders and the brotherhoods; but he would have dealt by methods too simple with the psychology of religious emotions; the words enthusiasm and fraud might have risen too often to his lips; and at the grotesque humors of the devout, which he would have exhibited with delight, he might have been too prone to smile.

As it is, Southey's largest works are not his most admirable. *The History of Brazil*, indeed, gives evidence of amazing patience, industry, and skill; but its subject necessarily excludes it from the first rank. At no time from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century was Brazil a leader or a banner-bearer among lands. The life of the people crept on from point to point, and that is all; there are few passages in which the chronicle can gather itself up, and transform itself into a historic drama. Southey has done all that was possible; his pages are rich in facts, and are more entertaining than perhaps any other writer could have made them. His extraordinary acquaintance with travel gave him many advantages in narrating the adventures of early explorers; and his studies in ecclesiastical history led him to treat with peculiar interest the history of the Jesuit Reductions.

The History of the Peninsular War suffers by comparison with the great work of Sir William Napier. That heroic man had himself been a portion of the strife; his senses, singularly keen, were attuned to battle: as he wrote, the wild bugle-calls, the measured tramp, the peals of musketry, the dismal clamor, sounded in his ears; he abandoned himself again to the swiftness and "incredible fury" of the charge. And with his falcon eye he could discern amid the shock or formless dispersion, wherever hidden, the fiery heart of victory. Southey wrought in his library as a man of letters; consulted sources, turned over manuscripts, corresponded with witnesses, set his material in order. The passion of justice and an enthusiasm on behalf of Spain give unity to his work. If he estimated too highly the disinterestedness and courage of the people of the Peninsula, the illusion was generous. And it may be that enduring spiritual forces become apparent to a distant observer, which are masked by accidents of the day and hour from one who is in their midst.

History as written by Southey is narrative rendered spiritual by moral ardor. There are no new political truths, he said. If there be laws of a nation's life other than those connected with elementary principles of morality, Southey did not discover these. What he has written may go only a little way towards attaining the ultimate ends of historical study, but so far as it goes it keeps the direct line. It is not led astray by will-o'-the-wisp, vague-shining theories that beguile night wanderers. Its method is an honest method as wholesome as sweet; and simple narrative, if ripe and sound at first, is none the less so at the end of a century.

In biography, at least, one may be well pleased with clear and charming narrative. Here Southey has not been surpassed, and even in this single province he is versatile; he has written the life of a warrior, of a poet, and of a saint. His industry was that of a German: his lucidity and perfect exposition were such as we rarely find outside a French memoir. There is no style fitter for continuous narrative than the pedestrian style of Southey. It does not beat upon the ear with hard, metallic vibration. The sentences are not cast by the thousand in one mould of cheap rhetoric, nor made brilliant with one cheap color. Never dithyrambic, he is never dull; he affects neither the trick of stateliness nor that of careless ease; he does not seek out curiosities of refinement, nor caress delicate affectations. Because his style is natural, it is inimitable, and the only way to write like Southey is to write well.

"The favorite of my library, among many favorites;" so Coleridge speaks of the *Life of Wesley*—"the book I can read for the twentieth time, when I can read nothing else at all." And yet the schoolboy's favorite—the *Life of Nelson*—is of happier inspiration. The simple and chivalric hero, his splendid achievements, his pride in duty, his patriotism, roused in Southey all that was most strong and high; but his enthusiasm does not escape in lyrical speech. "The best eulogy of Nelson," he says, "is the faithful history of his actions; the best history that which shall relate them most perspicuously." Only when all is over, and the captain of Trafalgar lies dead, his passion and pride find utterance: "If the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory." From Nelson on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*, to Cowper caressing his tame hares, the interval is wide; but Southey, the man of letters, lover of the fireside, and patron of cats, found it natural to sympathize with his brother poet. His sketches of literary history in the *Life of Cowper* are characteristic. The writer's range is wide, his judgment sound, his enjoyment of almost everything literary is lively; as critic he is kindly yet equitable. But the highest criticism is not his. Southey's vision was not sufficiently penetrative; he culls beauties, but he cannot pluck out the heart of a mystery.

His translations of romantic fiction, while faithful to their sources, aim less at literal exactitude than at giving the English reader the same pleasure which the Spaniard receives from the originals. From the destruction of Don Quixote's library Master Nicholas and the curate spared *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin of England*. Second to Malory's grouping of the Arthur cycle *Amadis* may well take its place. Its chivalric spirit, its wildness, its tenderness and beauty, are carefully preserved by the translator. But Southey's chief gift in this kind to English readers is *The Cid*. The poem he supposed, indeed, to be a metrical chronicle instead of a metrical romance—no fatal error; weaving together the best of the poem, the ballads and the chronicle, he produced more than a mere compilation. "I know no work of the kind in our language," wrote Coleridge, "none which, uniting the charms of romance and history, keeps the imagination so constantly on the wing, and yet leaves so much for after-reflection."

Of Southey's political writings something has been said in a former chapter. Among works which can be brought under no general head, one that pleased the public was *Espriella's Letters*, sketches of English landscape, life, and manners, by a supposed Spanish traveller. The letters, giving as they do a lively view of England at the beginning of the present century, still possess an interest. Apart from Southey's other works stands *The Doctor*; nowhere else can one find so much of his varied erudition, his genial spirits, his meditative wisdom. It asks for a leisurely reader content to ramble everywhere and no whither, and still pleased to take another turn because his companion has not yet come to an end of learning, mirth, or meditation. That the author of a book so characteristic was not instantly recognized, is strange. "The wit and humor of *The Doctor*," says Edgar Poe, a keen critic, "have seldom been equalled. We cannot think Southey wrote it." Gratitude is due to Dr. Daniel Dove from innumerable "good little women and men," who have been delighted with his story of *The Three Bears*. To know that he had added a classic to the nursery would have been the pride of Southey's heart. Wide eyes entranced and peals of young laughter still make a triumph for one whose spirit, grave with a man's wisdom, was pure as the spirit of a little child.

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